■ BUSINESS / B1

Peso at 3-year high of 52.09 due to foreigners buying stocks

■ NEWS / A5

Deal to sell Fraport's stake in Piatco to Manila Hotel collapses

Do you have a story to tell about Edsa I? The INQUIRER is looking for those untold stories (photos, too) that contributed, no matter how small, to the first People Power in 1986 that so stunned the world and inspired and emboldened people in chains everywhere to break free. The contributions that will be selected by the editors will be used for the INQUIRER's special celebration of the 20th anniversary of Edsa I. **Send your contribution, with your address and contact number, not later than Feb. 15 to fdelmundo@inquirer.com.ph**

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

y, February 2, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 56 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Noli sued by former staff for illegal dismissal

By Michael Lim Ubac and Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO, FORMER mainstay of the defunct television show "Magandang Gabi, Bayan," is facing a legal fight with employees of its producer, Bayan Productions Inc.

Seven writers, two researchers, three cameramen, two assistant cameramen/

NOLI SUED/ A6

300 camp out at Manny's gate waiting for 'balato'

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

WALANG KATAPUSAN YAN!!!

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Scores of people are patiently waiting outside the house of Manny Pacquiao here for a "balato" (tip) after his victory over Mexican

300 CAMP OUT/ A8

STATE OF DISCONTENT: Protesters clash with policemen near Malacañang at a rally on Wednesday, one of several anti-VAT rallies held simultaneously. REUTERS/REM ZAMORA

VAT sparks buying frenzy for cars, condos

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A DISCOUNT EQUIVALENT TO 2 PERCENT of today's retail prices of big ticket items was enough to fuel a buying frenzy of sorts among the well-to-do.

Sales of condominiums, cars and plasma TVs rose sharply before Feb. 1, the day the government raised the rate of the expanded value-added tax (VAT) from 10 percent to 12 percent.

Most retailers reported a surge in sales as buyers rushed to beat the 2-percentage-point increase in the VAT rate, said Samie Lim, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president.

"These buyers were probably set on buying these items this year and they just advanced

VAT SPARKS/ A6

CBCP: Quit option stays

Lagdameo explains pastoral statement

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr., *PDI Visayas Bureau*
and Christian V. Esguerra

ILOILO CITY—THE PRESIDENT OF THE Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday said that resignation remained an option for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resolve the "Hello Garci" controversy.

Archbishop Angel Lagdameo also brushed aside criticisms that the Catholic Church was interfering in politics. "When people do not like what we are saying, then we will be criticized as interfering in politics," Lagdameo said.

The archbishop of Jaro said that the resignation option was contained in the July 10, 2005, pastoral statement issued by the CBCP at the height of the wiretapping controversy that nearly unseated Ms Arroyo.

In last year's statement, the bishops stayed away from mounting calls for the President's resignation but said she should not ignore them.

Asked if last week's pastoral statement, issued after the

CBCP/ A6

ROMY HOMILLADA

THE GREATEST SECRET
Manuel V. Pangilinan, named 2005 Man of the Year by the Management Association of the Philippines, reveals in his acceptance speech on Tuesday that when it comes to success, there are no secrets: Success springs from old-fashioned values like honesty and diligence, hard work and commitment.

Fertilizer fund traced to solon's foundation

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau
and TJ Burgonio
in Manila

CEBU CITY—THE FOUNDATION that was to implement the Department of Agriculture's controversial hybrid rice program in Cebu's third district has the same address and phone number as the office and clinic of the district's representative, Antonio Yapha.

The people behind the foundation are employees of Yapha, a physician and one of the three Cebuano lawmakers who benefited from the DA's Hybrid Rice Commercialization (HRC) program. Yapha received P3 million, according to DA records.

The foundation was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on May 30, 2002, under the name "Kasosyo Foundation." Its given address was Cebu City, with phone number 412-5773; its registration number was A200208333.

FERTILIZER/ A8

Town mates rush to defend Faeldon's girl

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—RELATIVES AND town mates of Capt. Candelaria Rivas in Mambusao town, Capiz, have come to the defense of the officer who is facing investigation for allegedly "coddling" Oakwood mutineer Capt. Nicanor Faeldon after he escaped from detention.

Her sister Santiaga Rivas, a councilwoman of Barangay Maralag in Mambusao, said her family and town mates could not believe that "Lala," as the 33-year-old Candelaria is called, would be involved in the escape of Faeldon. *(See related story on Page A2.)*

"Lala is dedicated to her job. As a practicing lawyer, she knows the law," said Santiaga of her younger sister, a member of the Armed Forces Judge Advocate General's Office (Jago).

Maralag Barangay Captain Danilo Leonor said he would not believe that Lala would do what was contrary to law, especially that her late father, Jesus Rivas, was a respected lawyer in their town.

He said the residents of Maralag had high respect for Lala for

TOWN MATES/ A6

UP study finds toxic heavy metals near Lafayette mine

TOXIC HEAVY METALS LIKE LEAD and mercury were found in sediments surrounding the mine of Lafayette Philippines Inc. on Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay, according to independent tests commissioned by an environmental group.

The mine of Lafayette Philippines, a subsidiary of an Australian mining company, is touted as the showcase project of the Arroyo administration's mining program.

Analysis by the University of the Philippines' Environmental Engineering Department of 34 samples gathered by a fact-finding team last November showed that all samples contained heavy metals.

The samples contained toxic metals like mercury, lead, cadmium and arsenic, along with selenium, copper, chromium, barium, nickel and zinc, the Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC) said yesterday.

Heavy metals are a group of naturally occurring elements, which can be toxic to humans in high concentrations.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that damages the brain and causes cancer. It may induce abortion in pregnant women. Lead affects motor skills and physical development, while arsenic poisons the blood and respiratory system.

Previous testing by the Environment Management Bureau found only the presence of cyanide on Rapu-Rapu Island.

"It's not just cyanide for which

UP STUDY/ A8

Martin Luther King's widow dies

ATLANTA, GEORGIA—CORETTA Scott King, who battled to preserve the legacy of her slain husband, civil rights legend Martin Luther King Jr., has died at the age of 78, her family announced Tuesday.

Tributes poured in for the woman who continued to fight against racial injustice and spread the message of nonviolence in the four decades since her husband's assassination.

Andrew Young, a former civil rights activist who had remained close to the family, said Scott King died in her sleep overnight.

"Her daughter went in to wake her up and she was not able to and so she quietly slipped away. Her spirit will remain with us just as her husband's has," Young said.

Scott King died at 1 a.m. (0700

MARTIN/ A4

PDI PHOTO

THE DREAM that Coretta Scott King shared with her husband Martin Luther King Jr. did not die with him for she carried on to the mountaintop.

Bush: US must end addiction to ME oil

WASHINGTON—IN A STATE OF the Union speech that promised aggressive US engagement around the world, President George W. Bush on Tuesday said "America is addicted to oil" from the Middle East and must break its dependence.

Looking to restore confidence in his leadership, Bush stood before members of the US Congress and the rest of Washington's power elite in the chamber of the House of Representatives to map out an election-year agenda for Republicans. His speech was at times optimistic and at others combative.

And while he vowed to work to improve the tone of debate in Washington, he defended a domestic spying program that had outraged Democrats. To his harshest critics on Iraq, he said "second-guessing is not a strategy."

With three years left in office, Bush is hoping to lift his political fortunes and those of his Republican allies in an election year with control of Congress up for grabs. He is coming off one of the toughest stretches of his presidency, and his job approval ratings hover in the high 30s to low 40s in most polls.

The former oilman outlined a green agenda, promoting the need to improve technologies in order to reduce US oil imports from the Middle East 75 percent

BUSH/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/02/02/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

5 Faeldon coddlers arrested

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THE FIRST TIME YESTERday that Capt. Nicanor Faeldon had managed to sneak in and out of several military and police camps while he was on the lam and said they had taken in for questioning at least five soldiers who had helped the Marine officer pull off those stunts before he was recaptured last week.

Military spokesman Col. Tristan Kison admitted also that Faeldon and other leaders of the Oakwood mutiny continue to enjoy support from within the ranks.

"We're investigating the extent of the support," he added.

Kison made the statements as he disclosed that five enlisted men, at least two of whom were part of the July 27, 2003 Oakwood mutiny, were being questioned for allegedly coddling Faeldon after he escaped from his guards following a court appearance in Makati last Dec. 14.

Kison identified two of the five soldiers as Marine Pvts. Lorenzo Caranzo and Hardy Glaraga, who were flown in yesterday morning from the Western Command headquarters in Palawan and brought to the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

"It appears they facilitated Faeldon's movement [around Wescom], providing him a safehouse and transportation," Kison said. He took care to say they were "not arrested but invited for debriefing."

The three other enlisted personnel suspected of having helped Faeldon were also being questioned but Kison did not say who they were or where they were being held.

Caranzo and Glaraga were among 184 rebel soldiers released last May after a plea bargain in which they took a three-rank demotion and a pay cut for six months in exchange for the dismissal of court-martial charges.

According to Kison, the two were identified as Faeldon's supporters while Faeldon underwent debriefing by military intelligence following his recapture.

Faeldon through his website www.pilipino.org.ph had shown videos and photos of himself inside the Wescom headquarters in Puerto Princesa City last Dec. 21. More such videos followed showing him inside the Southern Command headquarters in Zamboanga City, and at the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame.

After his arrest last Jan. 27 – with Capt. Candelaria Rivas, a military prosecutor handling the Oakwood mutiny court-martial – supporters released videos and photos of Faeldon taken inside the Central Command headquarters in Cebu City and inside the military general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

Until Kison's admission yesterday, the military had dismissed the photos as the product of electronic manipulation.

Meanwhile, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon yesterday attested that Faeldon was not being tortured at Isafp, contrary to claims by Faeldon's lawyer Roel Pulido.

Biazon, an ex-military chief of staff and former Marine, brought with him a team of Senate doctors who checked Faeldon and found "no physical evidence of torture."

Aside from Biazon, Faeldon was also visited yesterday by two siblings, lawyer Gideon Mortel and ex-wife Tita Untalan. *With reports from Nikko Dizon and Alcuin Papa*

TONI BLACKMAN

Free concerts by US 'hip-hop ambassador'

FINALLY, WASHINGTON IS SENDING A woman ambassador to Manila – a "Hip-Hop Ambassador," that is.

The US government-endorsed Toni Blackman Hip-Hop Ensemble, which is currently touring Southeast Asia, will be giving free concerts in Manila, Davao and Cebu City this week, with the US Embassy serving as main sponsor.

"Ms Blackman is the US Hip-Hop Ambassador, a title bestowed upon her by the US Department of State in recognition of her steadfast commitment to integrating hip-hop performance with social education," the embassy said in a statement on Tuesday.

The youth-oriented shows are in line with the embassy's program of showcasing various sides of American culture, press attache Matthew Lussenhop told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Cojuangcos hit gov't plan to sell PLDT shares

By Armand N. Nocum

LAWYERS OF THE LATE RAMON Cojuangco, one of the major owners of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., yesterday assailed a reported government plan to dispose of a large block of PLDT shares which the Supreme Court recently declared as being part of the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Lawyer Leonardo Siguion-Reyna, counsel for the Cojuangco heirs, said the plan to sell was "premature" and "baseless" as the Cojuangcos have yet to file a motion for reconsideration of the SC decision.

The high court ruled last week that the government could proceed with the sequestration of more than a billion pesos worth of shares in PLDT as it affirmed the Presidential Commission on Good Government's suit that the shares were ill-gotten and should go to the government.

The dispute involved ownership of 111,415 shares of the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., which owned a 28-percent stake in PLDT at the time of the suit, in the name of Prime Holdings Inc. The Cojuangco family owned a controlling stake at PHI, making it the biggest stockholders of PLDT at the time.

The PCGG claimed that PTIC formed part of the Marcos ill-gotten assets and that Cojuangco and PHI acquired the PLDT shares as Marcos dummies.

In a statement, Siguion-Reyna said the court "failed to take into account well-established facts on the record that clearly showed Mr. Cojuangco owned the disputed shares."

"Mr. Ramon Cojuangco may have been a close friend of former President Ferdinand Marcos but he was not a person who asked for or received any special favors from and cannot therefore be considered a crony," he said.

"(Cojuangco's) interest in PLDT were all the fruits of his own labor and his acquisitions were made without the participation of former President Marcos," he added.

In its Jan. 20 decision, the high court upheld the PCGG claim that the government was the rightful owner of the 111,415 shares of PTIC in the name of PHI.

The case was a consolidation of five separate petitions between the government, the Cojuangcos and businessman Alfonso Yuchengco arising from Sandiganbayan Civil Case No .2 initiated by the PCGG against Marcos, their three children as well as other individuals.

In its ruling, the court said the PCGG "can and must recover for the Republic the 111,415 shares being held by PHI, they bearing the character of ill-gotten wealth whether they be in the hands of Marcos or those of Cojuangco."

The PTIC shares are being contested by the estate of the late Ramon Cojuangco and his wife, Imelda O. Cojuangco.

In 1999, Imelda Marcos, the widow of the dictator, filed a cross-claim with the Sandiganbayan, claiming that she and her late husband owned the 42 percent of PLDT held by the Cojuangco-Ongsiaco families, the 7.8 percent held by Yuchengco and the 3.1 percent held by businessman Antonio Meer.

Palace disowns deal with Danding

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.
and Philip C. Tubeza

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY claimed it was not privy to the alleged compromise deal being hammered out by the Presidential Commission on Good Government with businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco over the P130 billion sequestered shares in San Miguel Corp.

"He is doing it on his own. And we have confidence that as chair of PCGG, Sabio must have basis in law for his actions," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in a briefing. "I have no hold on such details."

PCGG chair Camilo Sabio has refused to divulge details of a compromise deal on the coconut levy funds with Cojuangco (who is currently San Miguel chair) despite intense grilling from senators who have threatened to give the agency a token P1 budget instead of the P67 million it had sought.

Ermita could not also explain why the PCGG was eager to enter into a settlement agreement with Cojuangco when the government had scored key victories in the Supreme Court in proving that the San Miguel shares being claimed by Cojuangco were part of former President Marcos' ill-gotten wealth.

Sabio had cited a provision in Executive Order No. 1, which bars any PCGG official from testifying before any legislative inquiry.

Yesterday, Sen. Joker Arroyo pressed Sabio to confirm whether President Macapagal-Arroyo approved negotiations with Cojuangco on the coco levy funds.

He noted that the P85 billion involved in the compromise deal was much bigger than all the ill-gotten wealth the PCGG had recovered from 1986 to 2004, including the seized P35 billion Marcos Swiss bank deposits.

Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Edgardo Angara warned that Sabio's refusal to answer questions about the PCGG's performance was "a passport to plunder" since it would put the agency outside the oversight powers of Congress or even the courts.

Indian president here tomorrow for state visit

INDIAN PRESIDENT APJ ABDUL Kalam arrives tomorrow for a four-day state visit, the first trip to the the Philippines by an Indian head of state in 15 years, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday.

Kalam will sign a defense cooperation agreement and explore trade and investment opportunities in technology and health services, including medical tourism.

President Fidel V. Ramos visited India in 1997, the DFA said.

Kalam will hold official talks with President Macapagal-Arroyo on Saturday, and address a joint session of Congress on Feb. 6.

An eminent scientist in his country, Kalam will be meeting with students, teachers and scientists at the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Science High School in Quezon City.

India and the Philippines are considered leaders in business processes outsourcing and have strong potentials in medical tourism, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo said in a statement.

The government has also identified India as a major source of affordable medicines, he said.

Philippine imports from India reached $290.3 million against exports of $79.1 million as of October 2005.

The two countries hold annual security dialogues, and a defense accord, covering naval and maritime cooperation, is expected to be signed during the visit. *Volt Contreras*

AN APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS: AMEND THE EVAT LAW IMMEDIATELY

COPW appeals to the President to certify a priority bill to Congress to reduce the EVAT on electricity and petroleum products from 12% to 10%, and remove the 70% cap on input VAT.

The full implementation of the EVAT and the continuing increase in the world market prices of petroleum products will translate to price increases to be shouldered by the consumers.

TRANSPARENCY IS CRUCIAL AS WORLD OIL PRICES CONTINUE TO ESCALATE

As provided by the Oil Deregulation Law, the DOE, DOF, the oil refiners (Shell & Petron) and New Players must explain the basis of their price increase as follows:

1. The actual inventory of the Oil Companies and the actual average inventory cost of their importations as of January 27, 2006, which are available through Customs declaration.
2. The actual foreign exchange rates used in paying their import bills, based on BSP or commercial bank rates.

COPW RECOMMENDS THE EXPANSION OF GOVERNMENT'S ROLLING STORES

COPW recommends to the President to expand the "Tindahan ng Bayan" to include coupons for 11-kg cooking gas tanks to be made available **ONLY** to the depressed areas in Metro Manila.

The use of coupons will ensure that the depressed areas do no get more than their requirements and to reduce the government's subsidy, Petron and Shell should sell them at wholesale price.

COPW also appeals to local sugar producers to sell sugar at a special discount to the government, and this subsidy will be temporary as the prices will normalize within the next two months, as it will be the milling season by then.

COPW HOPES THAT THESE PROPOSED MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO HELP THE CONSUMING PUBLIC, ESPECIALLY THE POOR IN THE DEPRESSED AREAS.

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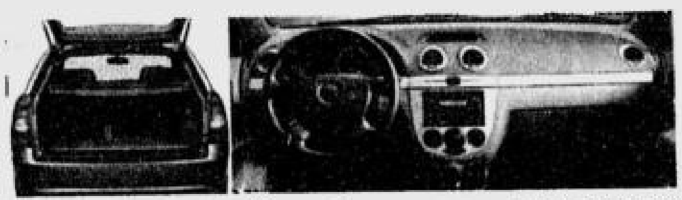

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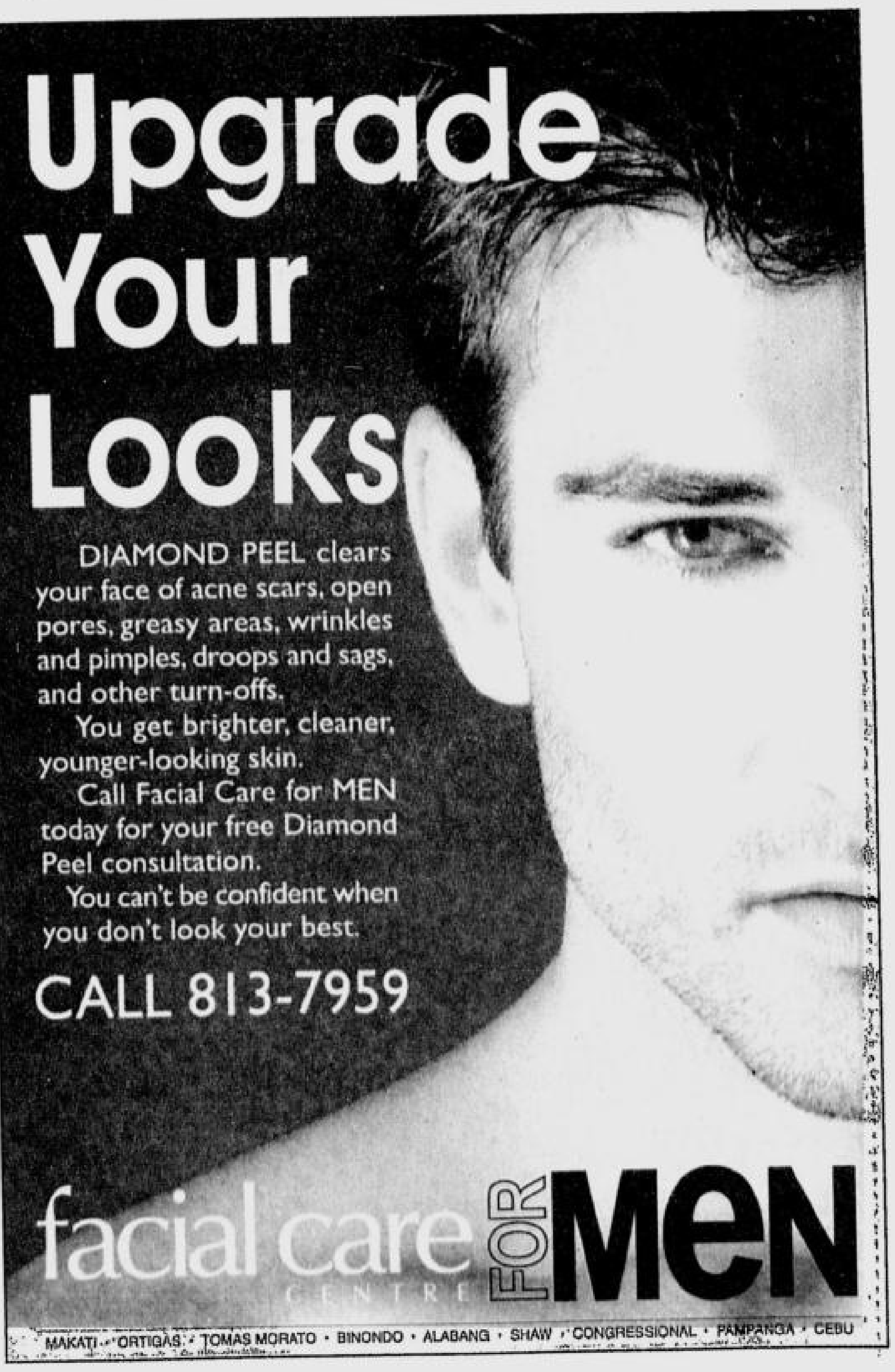

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The most interesting people and personalities leave their mark in the pages of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine

INQUIRER

Bush: US must end addiction to Mideast oil

From page A1

by 2025.

Soaring gasoline prices are a central factor in Bush's fall from grace with Americans. Oil prices are close to record levels and Exxon just reported record profits of $10.7 billion in the fourth quarter of 2005.

"America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world," Bush said. "The best way to break this addiction is through technology."

He vowed to fund additional research into cutting-edge methods of producing ethanol not just from corn but from wood-chips or grasses and set a six-year goal for making this alternative fuel practical and competitive.

"By applying the talent and technology of America, this country can dramatically improve our environment, move beyond a petroleum-based economy, and make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past," he said.

Critics doubted Bush ever really severed his ties from the oil industry and were skeptical he would put the kind of effort into conservation and alternative fuel research they say is needed. His previous energy initiatives have had little impact on prices or supplies.

End hollow promises

"The president needs to put an end to his hollow promises and take action to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, the future of the United States depends on it," said Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Ed Markey.

Bush also vowed the United States will remain aggressively engaged around the world and will reject the temptation of protectionism and isolationism under his watch.

He said he would never give up in his battle against radical Islam, saying America's enemies and friends should be certain: "The United States will not retreat from the world, and we will never surrender to evil."

The comments amounted to a rejection of those Democrats and others who claimed US policies in Iraq and in the war on terrorism were doing more harm than good abroad.

No troop cut

On Iraq, Bush argued against those Democrats who have been calling for a timetable for a phased redeployment of US troops in Iraq, saying a "sudden withdrawal of our forces from Iraq would abandon our Iraqi allies to death and prison."

THE UNITED STATES will not withdraw from the world, declares President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address at Capitol Hill on Tuesday. He promised he would never give up his battle against radical Islam and to reject protectionism and isolationism. AP

He offered little hope of a US reduction in force any time soon, as usual saying it depended on how quickly Iraqi forces can defend themselves.

In a nod to critics who contend the war was fought over false pretenses, Bush said: "However we feel about the decisions and debates of the past, our nation has only one option: We must keep our word, defeat our enemies, and stand behind the American military in its vital mission."

In the Democratic reaction to Bush's speech, Virginia's new governor, Tim Kaine, said Democrats wanted to win the war in Iraq but wondered if Bush's policies were the best way.

"We now know that the American people were given inaccurate information about the reasons for invading Iraq. We now know that our troops in Iraq were not given the best body armor or the best intelligence," Kaine said.

Mentioning several world hot spots, Bush said "the world must not permit" Iran to develop a nuclear weapon amid international efforts to force Tehran not to enrich uranium.

Iran and Palestine

He said Iran was being "held hostage" by Islamic clerics and that the United States hoped one day to be friends with a free and democratic Iran.

And Bush laid down what might ultimately be conditions for US relations with Hamas, the Islamic militant group that won a stunning victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections last week.

"The Palestinian people have voted in elections, now the leaders of Hamas must recognize Israel, disarm, reject terrorism and work for lasting peace," Bush said.

No freedoms in 4 states

In a sign of concern about non-Muslim as well as Muslim states, Bush cited Burma and Zimbabwe—along with Iran, North Korea and Syria—as countries where freedoms were lacking and must be instilled.

Due to election year realities, there were no sweeping proposals along the lines of his big Social Security revamp, which fizzled after its high-profile roll-out a year ago.

In the televised speech before millions, Bush called for a bipartisan commission to study the solvency of the Social Security retirement system, as well as the Medicare and Medicaid health insurance programs. *Reuters*

Martin Luther King's widow dies in her sleep; 78

From page A1

GMT) of a heart attack at a holistic clinic in Rosarito, Mexico, said institution director Humberto Simanti. She had also been fighting ovarian cancer.

Scott King owned a house in the Mexican seaside town, located on the Pacific coast just south of the US border, local police said.

Her body was being taken to Atlanta, Georgia, for burial.

Remarkable, courageous

President George W. Bush led political tributes for Scott King, who last year suffered a heart attack and a stroke.

"Mrs. King was a remarkable and courageous woman, and a great civil rights leader," Bush said in a statement. "Mrs. King's lasting contributions to freedom and equality have made America a better and more compassionate nation."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the highest ranking African-American in the US government, said the world had "lost a champion of human rights."

Rev. Al Sharpton, a prominent civil rights activist and family friend, remembered Scott King as a "compassionate, caring, yet firm matriarch of the movement for justice."

Towering presence

A tribute also came from South Africa, where she traveled in 1994 to see Nelson Mandela become the country's first democratically elected president at the end of apartheid.

"In our own struggle against apartheid in South Africa, Coretta and Dr. Martin Luther King were at all times a towering presence, who, through their experiences, provided guidance, inspiration and, indeed, helped us to maintain the unshakable belief that we, too, would overcome," said South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Coretta Scott, a promising singer, married Martin Luther King Jr. in 1953 and immediately supported his equal rights campaign, often speaking in the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's place when he was unable to attend an engagement.

She was with him in 1963 when he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

Four days after his assassination on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Scott King led an equal rights march of 50,000 people through the streets of the Tennessee city where her husband died.

Nonviolent change

In the years after, while raising four children, she campaigned fiercely to keep alive her husband's message of nonviolent change.

She created The King Center in Atlanta, where flags were at half mast on Tuesday. Local politicians and scores of people went to the center with wreaths. The US Congress also lowered its flags in her honor in Washington.

In the 1980s Scott King pushed for the creation of a national holiday honoring her husband and his crusade to eradicate racial segregation. The holiday was established in 1986 and is now observed on the third Monday of January.

Scott King participated in protests in Washington against South Africa's apartheid in the 1980s, and later opposed the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Big dreams

Born April 27, 1927, in segregated Alabama, Coretta grew up on her parents' farm. Though poor, the parents had big dreams for their three children.

Her father, Obediah Scott, was the first black man in the area to own a truck and then launched a truck-farming business, which drew opposition from white neighbors.

Her mother, Bernice, frustrated that buses took only white children to school, rented a bus to transport black children to classes.

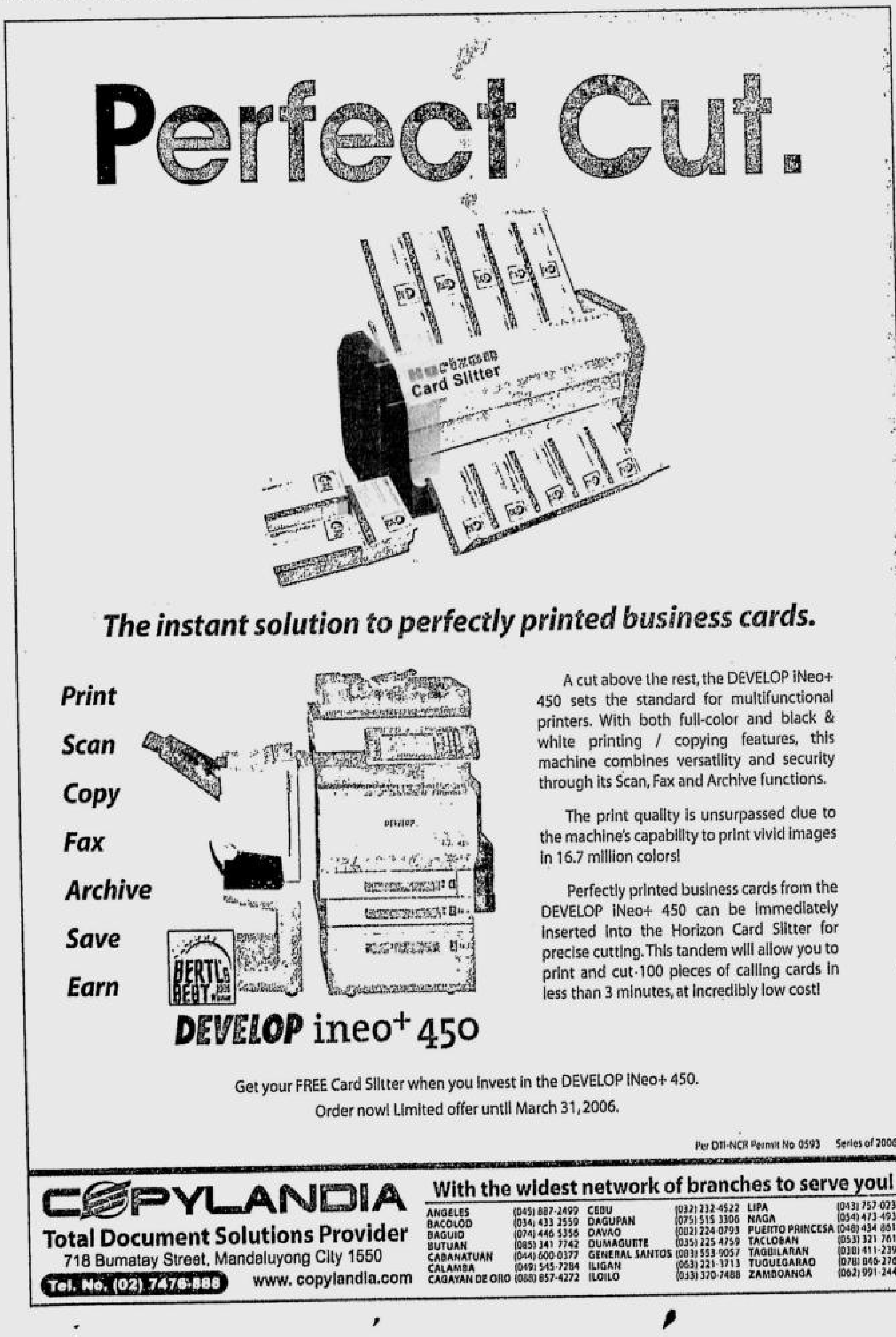
In 1945, after graduating from high school, King followed her older sister Edyth to Antioch College in Ohio, where she earned a degree in music and elementary education. Her sister was the college's first full-time black student.

Coretta went on to study at the New England Conservatory of Music in 1951 in Boston, where she met Martin Luther King Jr., who was a doctoral candidate at Boston University's theology school.

Turbulent years

The couple moved to Montgomery, Alabama, during some of the most turbulent years of the civil rights movement.

Their first daughter was born a few days before Martin Luther King Jr. led a boycott to end the racial segregation of Montgomery's buses—a watershed event in the civil rights movement. *AFP*



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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, February 2, 2006
Presentation of the Lord

1st Reading: Mal 3:1-4
2nd Reading: Heb 2:14-18
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 (or Luke 2:22-32)

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see.

Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

Commentary

The prophet cries out that the one awaited will enter the sanctuary and is already here. Can we bear his presence, a refiner's fire that makes pure silver and gold? And Jesus is brought into the temple and presented to the Lord in accordance with the law of Moses. First born, he belongs to God alone. He will be peace. He will be a sign of contradiction in Israel. He will be the prophet who is the Word of the Lord. He is subject to human beings and to the Word of God. We too are presented to God in our baptism. Is this Word of God refining us into pure silver and gold, as Jesus was through obedience?

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Corrections

IN THE JAN. 27 issue, the front-page banner story—"Use of P100-M fund probed"—misstated the previous position held by Jocelyn Bolante in the Department of Agriculture. Bolante used to be an agriculture undersecretary—not secretary.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 29 ISSUE, a story on Page 5 of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine—"Don't label him leftist nor rightist, but call him passionate"—misstated in the subhead the name of one of the counsels of the Magdalo soldiers. The lawyer's name is Roberto Rafael—not Renato—Pulido.

* * *

IN LATER EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 29 issue, the headline of a front-page story—"Taipans put in P5B to get 5M tourists in 5 years"—misstated the amount that taipans are willing to invest to bring in tourists to the country. The taipans are investing $5 billion—not P5 billion.

* * *

IN EARLY EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 31 issue, a front-page story—"Mine firms warn of job, capital risks"—misstated in the lead paragraph that "up to 10 million jobs are at risk of economic dislocation over calls by Catholic bishops to repeal the Mining Act of 1995 and cancel all existing mining permits." What Philip Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, indicated at a press conference was that about 10 million people faced economic dislocation if the bishops would have their way.

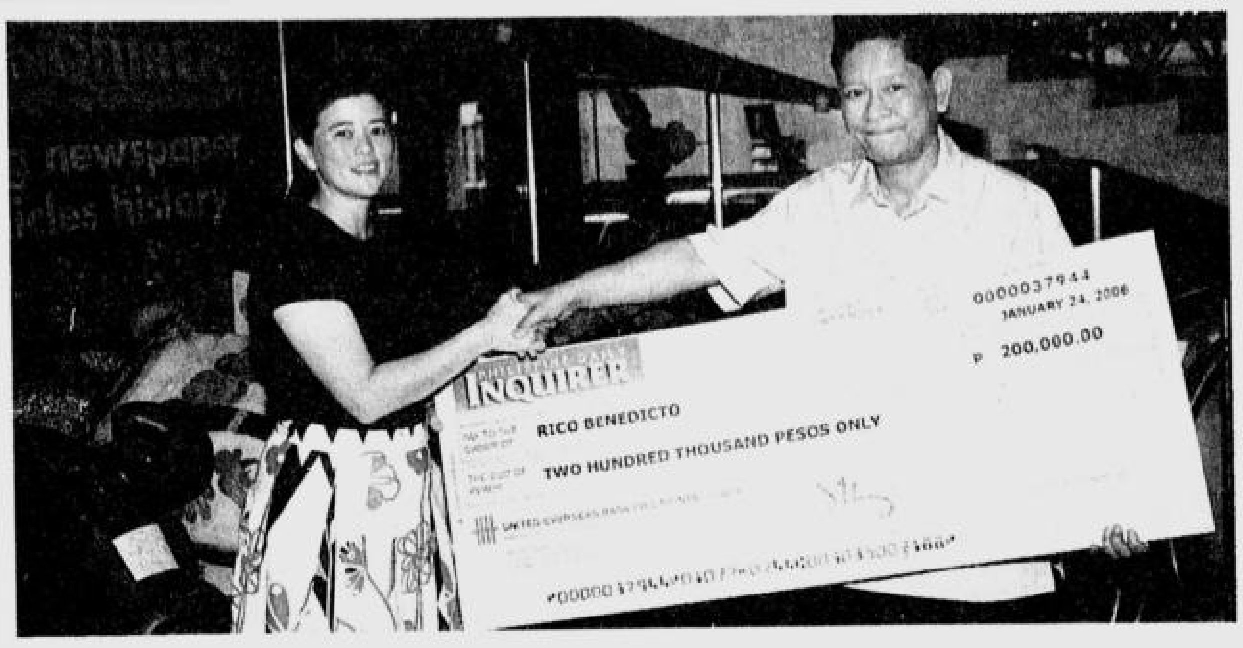
* * *

IN EARLY EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 31 issue, the front-page banner story—"RP growth slower but surprising"—carried an erroneous byline. The correct byline is Michelle V. Remo—not Ramos.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.



PLATINUM CODE PROMO WINNER BETOY JOHNSON

INQUIRER president and CEO Alexandra "Sandy" Prieto-Romualdez congratulates Rico Benedicto for winning the grand prize of P200,000 in the INQUIRER's Platinum Code Promo. Benedicto, 52, is from Quezon City. His name was drawn last December among the thousands of readers who texted their names and answers to the promo which was held in connection with the INQUIRER's 20th anniversary celebration.

Deal to sell Fraport's stake in Piatco collapses

FRANKFURT/MANILA—FRANKFURT AIRport operator Fraport said a deal to sell its stake in Philippine International Air Terminal Co. Inc. (Piatco), which built the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 project, to Manila Hotel for $200 million has collapsed.

"Substantial roadblocks in reaching an agreement could not be removed," Fraport said in a statement on Wednesday.

Fraport said it was continuing to pursue compensation for its holding in the terminal through the World Bank after.it was seized by the Philippine government in December 2004. Manila had rejected Fraport's request for $425 million in compensation.

In Manila, the Supreme Court upheld on Wednesday its earlier order for the government to pay an initial P3 billion to the Fraport-led consortium that built the terminal.

Fraport said in August it had accepted Manila Hotel's offer for its stake in the Piatco consortium and that it would receive an initial sum of $50 million once it signed the deal, followed by the remaining $150 million within six months of signing.

"After five months of discussions, Fraport has declared an end to negotiations," Fraport said. "For the intended transaction, among others, a waiver of right of first refusal by the co-shareholders was required. This waiver was not declared."

A source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Jan. 24 that the deal had not been concluded and was expected to fall through. And Fraport finance chief Stefan Schulte had told Reuters in November that the deal had been delayed and could yet fail.

Fraport said on Wednesday it was confident it had a strong case for compensation at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes at the World Bank. *Reuters*

Sandigan allows Erap eye surgery

THE SANDIGANBAYAN SPECIAL DIVISION YESterday allowed ousted President Joseph Estrada to stay on at the San Juan Medical Center and undergo reconstructive surgery to remove excess eyelid skin which is said to be impairing his vision.

Dr. Lorenzo Hocson, Estrada's personal physician, had recommended the medical procedure and gave a detailed report of the disgraced leader's health condition to the anti-graft court.

Estrada was brought to the SJMC last Thursday because of an infection in his right eye that, doctors said, could be life-threatening if left untreated.

Hocson said Estrada's stay in the hospital could be extended for two or three days, or until Sunday, after his eyelid surgery.

He said that if doctors succeed in removing the infection with antibiotics, Estrada could undergo corrective surgery today.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio told reporters that an eye infection was a serious matter. He said this was why the prosecution panel did not oppose Estrada's being temporarily released from "rest house arrest" to undergo a check-up.

"Maybe they could even have the former President undergo a computer tomography scan to make sure that his condition was not brought about by a mild stroke," Villa-Ignacio suggested.

Hocson explained that the surgery, to be done on both eyelids, was meant to repair the eyelid muscles and correct their droop.

He stressed, however, that there was no problem with Estrada's vision.

"We cannot just operate on the infected eye. The correct surgical procedure is that we have to operate on both eyelids to ensure symmetry," Hocson told the smiling justices.

He also stressed that the operation was not for aesthetic reasons but was a medical procedure to correct a physical problem.

Aside from the eye check-up, Estrada will be going through a series of medical examinations.

In his report, Hocson said Estrada was suffering from preseptal cellulitis, an infection from an insect bite, and dermatochalasis, or excess skin in the eyelid.

The report was also signed by ophthalmologist Dr. Eduardo Sarabia who examined Estrada's infected eye.

"As yet, the patient's condition is not life-threatening but if the infection is left untreated, it could cause blindness and eventually affect the brain which would then make it life-threatening," Hocson said. *Nelson F. Flores*

Gov't eyes drones for spy missions

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS ORdered the purchase of unmanned spy planes to help guard the troubled southeast Asian archipelago's maritime borders, the presidential palace said Wednesday.

The executive order issued by Arroyo called for a "maritime aerial reconnaissance and surveillance" program to be supervised by the intelligence services, according to the text of the order released by her office.

Ms Arroyo authorized the "procurement or lease of unmanned aerial vehicles," or drones, as well as other reconnaissance and surveillance equipment, the statement said.

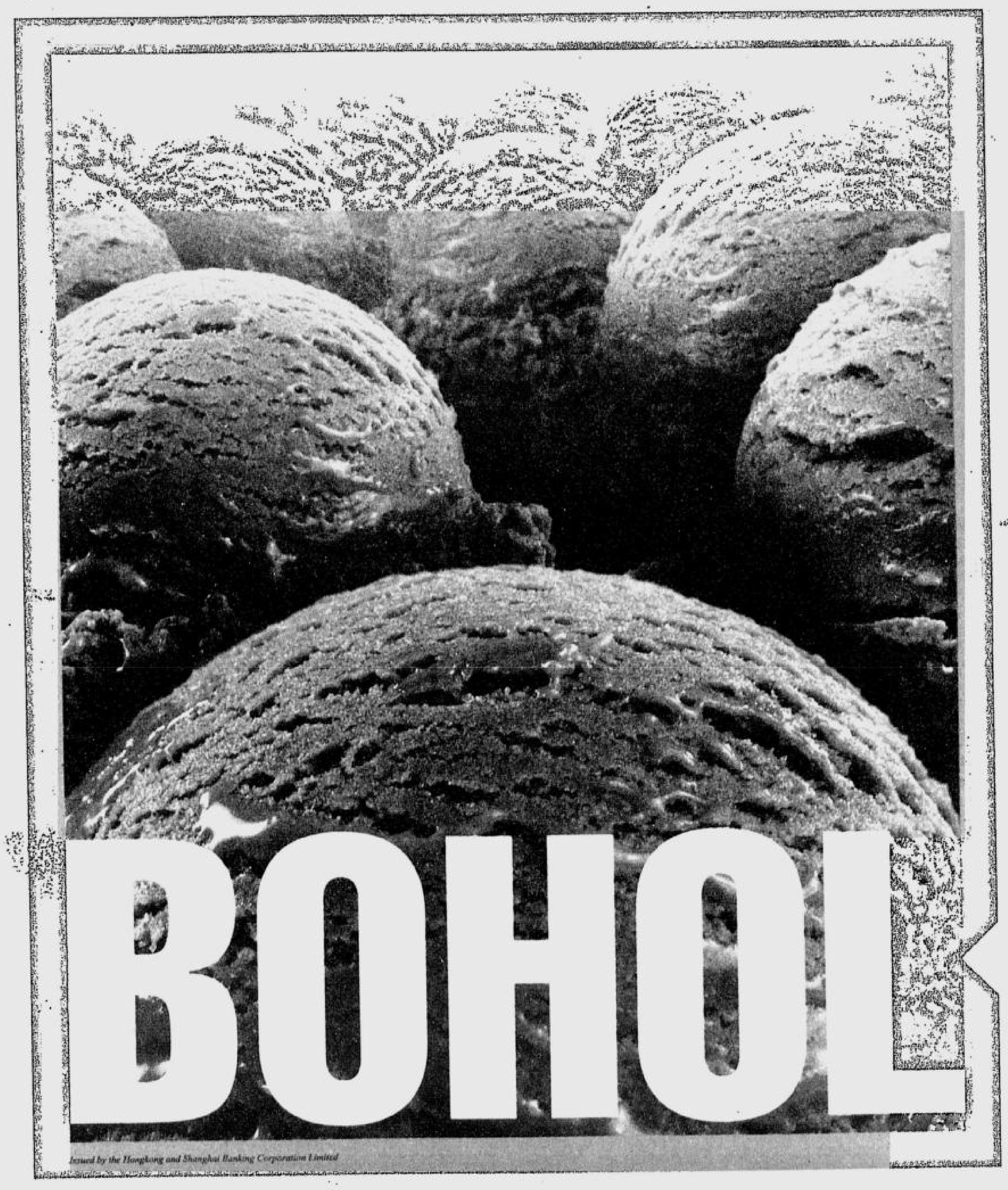
The new spy hardware shall provide "dominant situational awareness to swiftly and effectively interdict when an illegal activity occurs," she said.

The Philippines is grappling with both communist and Muslim separatist rebellions, as well as the threat of violence from Islamic militants with alleged links to the al-Qaida network.

Manila also is embroiled in a territorial dispute with its neighbors over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

The drones will primarily fly over maritime zones to "enhance the national capability to gather near real-time video recording and information for decision-making needs," the Arroyo directive said.

The Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands that shares a vast, common sea border with other Southeast Asian countries where al-Qaida-linked militants operate. *AFP*



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CBCP: Quit option stays

From page A1

prelates' first plenary this year, reflected what the CBCP felt about the unresolved political crisis, Lagdameo said: "Probably. Partly, we can say that that is a statement of frustration."

"We did not change (the July 10 statement). So it still stays that the President listen to the voice of the people," Lagdameo told reporters here after the launching of the People's Graftwatch of Iloilo Inc.

3 options

The voluntary resignation of the President was one of three measures the CBCP proposed last year to put a closure to the worst political crisis hounding the Arroyo presidency.

The two other options were impeachment and the creation of a truth commission to look into allegations Ms Arroyo manipulated the May 2004 presidential election.

The opposition said wiretapped phone conversations purportedly between Ms Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano suggested fraud was committed in the 2004 balloting.

Ms Arroyo's dominant allies in the House of Representatives killed the impeachment case against Ms Arroyo last September. No effort has so far been made to set up the truth commission.

Evasion and obstruction

Sunday's CBCP statement recommended that the search for truth in the wiretapping controversy be "pursued relentlessly," noting that last year's effort was marked by "evasion and obstruction."

In Manila on Monday, Bishop Teodoro Bacani said the CBCP's latest pastoral statement was clearly prompted by the failed impeachment case against Ms Arroyo and Garcillano's recent testimony before a joint House inquiry into the wiretapping scandal.

In his three appearances during the House inquiry, Garcillano denied allegations he conspired with the President to rig the 2004 election. He also said he could not identify the voice caught in the tape. He admitted he did not think anyone believed his testimony.

The impeachment case and the Garcillano testimony were not yet present when the CBCP came up with its first statement on the crisis last July, Bacani said.

"Before we did this new statement," Lagdameo said, "we first talked among ourselves and had a national consultation. We got the minds of all bishops."

Addressed to GMA

Lagdameo said prelates were so involved in last week's discussions that he recorded 137 interventions—the number of times a bishop spoke on a specific issue—while they were deliberating on the pastoral letter.

"We examined the document, line by line, so bishops could put their specific concerns," he said.

Bacani said that some bishops pushed for the inclusion of the impeachment issue in the statement to indicate strongly that it was specifically addressed to the President.

'Impeachment'

"Before, it was not there," he recalled. "But we thought that without it, it would seem that the President was not covered by the statement. So we included the word 'impeachment' to make things clear."

Bacani said what came out was a pastoral statement unmistakably attacking Ms Arroyo.

"Now, more evidence surfaced that there really was cheating during the last elections," Bacani said. "What we just don't exactly know is how big the cheating was, but it was indeed big. Things are clearer now to the bishops."

"We just didn't name Gloria but on many items, it was clear that she's the one being referred to," Bacani said, noting the "acts of evasion and obstruction" in the Garcillano wiretapping mentioned in the statement.

"Who else would do that besides the President and her allies?" he said.

Bishop Antonio Ledesma of Ipil also said the plenary essentially dismissed ousted President Joseph Estrada's appeal to the CBCP to intervene in the plunder case against him.. He said he thought the issue "was not that pressing."

Also glossed over during the CBCP plenary was a similar plea for intervention by the imprisoned Oakwood mutineers.

Makati Business Club

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE MAKATI BUSINESS CLUB reiterated its stand that political instability and uncertainties should be resolved first before the country could plunge into far-reaching reforms like adopting the parliamentary system.

Guillermo Luz, MBC executive director, said in an interview changes in the Charter should be done after an election or after the resignation of Ms Arroyo.

"Our lives would not change overnight even if we instituted changes in the (basic law) when these changes are practiced with the same people, the same party and the same electoral system," he said.

Luz said the most crucial issue was addressing the unresolved wiretapping controversy.

He added that MBC was against scrapping the election in 2007 as well as making changes to the Constitution through a constituent assembly as Malacañang had proposed.

Luz said the MBC had not changed its position of asking the President to resign.

"Political instability and uncertainties remain on the top of the mind of the business community," he said.

VAT sparks buying frenzy for cars, condos, plasma TVs

From page A1

their purchases to get a discount," said Lim who runs Automatic Center and Blim's Fine Furniture.

In consumer electronics, Lim said buyers were loading up not only on giant plasma TVs, one of the best selling items last year, but also on hi-fidelity audio-video equipment, air conditioners, refrigerators and even electric fans.

Cash payment only

"Buyers are getting more price conscious these days and we saw these not only in our high-end branches but also in our low-end markets," Lim said.

The "panic buying" was also evident in real estate and automobiles in which a 2-percent discount would translate to a discount of between five and six figures.

But buyers must pay in cash to dodge the increase in the VAT rate.

Robinson's Land and Federal Land both noted a spike in condominium sales particularly during the last week of January.

The country's leading automotive assemblers saw an unusual queue of buyers in what is a traditionally slow month.

200 cars in a month

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. reported that it sold 200 units from Jan. 30 to 31 when Malacañang had erased all doubts that it would push through with the VAT rate increase.

The country's leading assembler, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp., did not give exact figures but its dealers nationwide reported a "rush of customers" starting Jan. 27.

Mitsubishi Motors Corp., however, said there was an increase in both fleet and individual buyers but there was "no big rush."

Lim said consumers were also bracing for an inevitable change in price tags in the coming days as manufacturers quote higher prices for their goods.

"Retailers are waiting for each other to charge higher prices because nobody wants to make the first move," he said.

At Abensons, a chain of stores selling appliances, prices for plasma TVs did not go up yesterday because of the higher VAT rate.

The retail price of a 42-inch plasma TV ranges from P159,000 to P200,000, while a 50-inch plasma TV costs between P300,000 and P350,000.

Protest rallies

The implementation of the 12-percent VAT yesterday triggered protest rallies.

Policemen arrested nine protesters who tried to break through a police barricade during simultaneous rallies in Manila.

Police arrested members of the militant group Akbayan near Gate 7 of the Malacañang Palace and on Morayta Street in Sampaloc.

More than a hundred members of militant groups, including Sanlakas, Freedom from Debt Coalition and Akbayan, held simultaneous rallies to protest the implementation of the 12-percent VAT.

Injuries

A small group of demonstrators staged a lightning rally at the Plaza Miranda.

Supt. Arturo Paglinawan, chief of the Manila Police District-General Assignment Section, said some of those arrested suffered minor injuries during the dispersal.

Scores of policemen were also hurt as some members of the militant groups were armed with stones. With a report from Tina G. Santos

Town mates rush to defend Faeldon's girl

From page A1

the help she generously extended to her village and were praying that she would prevail over the controversy.

Moved to holding center

Candelaria, who had been detained at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces in Camp Aguinaldo since Jan. 27 when she was arrested with Faeldon, had been transferred to the camp's holding center.

The center is intended for officers on "floating status" or those under investigation.

Brig.Gen. Marlu Quevedo, chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), explained the transfer was ordered by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga.

Santiaga said Lala was instrumental in lighting the entire Sitio Baluarte, located about 1.5 km from the town proper.

She said her sister asked Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, her teacher at the University of Santo Tomas College of Law, to fund the electrification of her sitio, which has a population of 30 households.

'Clean and green'

The senator granted Lala's request and used her Priority Development Assistance Fund to purchase the electrical materials and posts.

Santiaga said Lala used to raise funds for the cash prizes for "clean and green" contest in Barangay Maralag.

She said her sister solicited money from her colleagues in the law firm that she earlier worked with to come up with P10,000 to P20,000 in cash prizes for the contest.

Lala had also opened her doors to those who sought legal advice from her, said Leonor in a separate interview. Santiaga said Lala was a preacher of the Christian group Born Again in Barangay Maralag.

Mother doesn't know

Lala is the fifth of the six children of Jesus Rivas and Precevenia Rivas, a housewife. Jesus died five years ago.

Santiaga said she and her siblings had not told their mother, Precevenia, 68, about what happened to Lala because she's in poor health.

All that their mother knows, she added, was that Lala was connected with the military.

Santiaga said she planned to go to Manila to check on her sister and to know what really happened. She added that she was not aware that Lala had a boyfriend, and even suitors.

Santiaga, 32, said her sister graduated valedictorian at the Balit Elementary School and Balit National High School.

Lala was a scholar at UST in Manila where she took up Bachelor of Science in Commerce. It was also in UST where she got her law degree.

She passed the bar in 2002. Lala went into private law practice for three years before she worked at the Jago.

Lovers?

Faeldon escaped from his military escorts last Dec. 14 while attending the coup d'état case filed in the Makati Regional Trial Court for allegedly being one of six leaders in the mutiny staged at the Oakwood serviced hotel in Makati in July 2003.

After more than a month in hiding, the military agents arrested Faeldon with Rivas, one of the military prosecutors in the mutineers general court-martial.

Military officials claimed that the two were lovers. But Faeldon denied the relationship, saying the romantic angle was being played up to downplay the support he was allegedly getting from his brothers in arms.

Building house

Rivas' last visit home in Sitio Baluarte was last Dec. 16 to check on the small house that she was constructing.

But she only stayed for two days and left without spending Christmas with her family because she had pressing matters to attend to in Manila, said Santiaga.

The elder sister said Lala's house estimated to cost about P200,000. The construction started early last year but it could not be completed immediately due to lack of funds.

Santiaga explained Lala used whatever was left of her pay to fund the construction of her house. If her sister ran out of money, she added, the carpenters stopped working on the house and would continue when the money had arrived.

Two weeks ago, Santiaga said she received a text message from her sister to ask about the construction of her house.

They had not talked since then.

Innocent until ...

"Captain Rivas has not been charged. She is innocent until proven otherwise," Quevedo said to explain the transfer of the military prosecutor.

Quevedo also said he ordered Isafp personnel to stop issuing comments on the alleged romance between Rivas and Faeldon. *With a report from Fe Zamora*

Noli sued by former staff for illegal dismissal

From page A1

drivers and a production assistant yesterday lodged a complaint against De Castro and his wife Arlene, Allan Sinsuat and Ariel Nepomuceno—all Bayan Productions incorporators—for allegedly committing every unfair practice in the labor code.

"Give us justice. That's all we ask. Kabayan is not pro-poor, as he portrays himself to be. His public image is a product of television," said one complainant, writer Joseph Hernal.

Labor arbiter Virgilio Azarraga set the preliminary hearings on Feb. 22 and 27.

Among the grounds cited in the complaint filed with the National Labor Relations Commission was that De Castro et al. abandoned the complainants without giving them severance pay after the ABS-CBN network pulled the long-running weekly show off the air last Dec. 31.

The specific charges filed were "constructive" illegal dismissal, illegal suspension, illegal layoff and (non)regularization, underpayment and/or nonpayment of benefits, and unfair labor practice.

P100 million

But in an interview with the INQUIRER, De Castro said all employees of Bayan Productions, including himself, were just "talents" in MGB. Thus, he said, there really was no employer-employee relationship.

He also said that the status of the show's talents had been known to them since the program was first aired, and that in 2003, Bayan Productions even distributed a "manual for talents" in the show to explain their relationship with ABS-CBN.

Maria Nympha Mandagan, lawyer for the complainants, said the unpaid employees' benefits for the last 18 years were estimated at P100 million.

The amount supposedly represents the underpayment or nonpayment of salaries, overtime pay (including night differential), medical benefits, holiday pay, premium for holiday pay and rest day, service incentive leave, 13th-month pay, separation pay and retirement benefits.

Mandagan said her clients were also seeking moral and exemplary damages as well as attorney's fees.

According to the complainants, the Lopezes, owners of ABS-CBN, had nothing to do with the filing of the labor case. They pointed out that network owners Luisito Alejandro, Philbert Berba and Eugenio Lopez III had been named co-respondents.

The axing of MGB—which made De Castro famous as "Kabayan" and helped launch his political career—ended its run of close to 18 years.

The INQUIRER reported in January that the program's contract was not renewed when it expired last Dec. 31, and quoted a network insider as saying that this was because of De Castro's "problems" with the Lopezes regarding his support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Maria Ressa, ABS-CBN news and current affairs head, denied this, saying the show's cancellation was an "organizational move."

Line-produced show

De Castro explained that Bayan Productions was put up solely for MGB, which was line-produced by ABS-CBN, to avoid red tape in the release of funds for the show.

He said it was the network which provided the budget and earned from the commercials run in the show.

De Castro said that as talents, the complainants were not entitled to bonuses, overtime pay, severance pay or any benefits because they were not regular employees of the network. He said their "talent fee" was paid on a per-program basis.

Regarding the figure quoted by the complainants' lawyer, he said: "Bayan Productions is not even making that much. So how could they have earned P100 million?"

De Castro insisted that Bayan Productions had paid all its talents on time, and dutifully remitted their contributions to the Social Security System.

"I was a talent there until I left when I became Vice President," he said. "Maybe what they were referring to was their talent fee for December, which was when the show was cancelled. But that fee has always come from ABS-CBN, which will still give them the money. The network can withhold their salary. Perhaps they just need certain papers to get it."

De Castro stressed that the bonuses and other benefits received by MGB talents had come from Bayan Productions, which is headed by his wife Arlene.

"I give my own money each Christmas because they are not entitled to a bonus," he said, adding that many of the talents owed him and his family money used for tuition and medical expenses.

'Left hanging'

Hernal, who had been with "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" since 1997, told the INQUIRER that the show's employees had been barred from working in any of the shows of the network, and that he and his colleagues had nowhere to go.

"We were left hanging, so we decided to file the case to get what is due us," Hernal said, adding:

"We can't believe that this can happen to us. We thought he genuinely cared for his own people, his staff. The deception was so intense ... even to the last moment," he said.

The complainants said they met with the De Castros last Dec. 26 and were promised continued employment.

But nothing came out of the promise, and they stopped receiving their salaries starting on Jan. 10, they said.

The complainants said they had asked the De Castros to explain the status and future of the show and its employees, to no avail.

They said they were later informed by Bayan Productions that they had no security of tenure despite their not being allowed to do sideline jobs with ABS-CBN shows or other programs in rival networks.

The complainants also said that the last time they checked, only six of the original 50 staff members would be absorbed by a new show to be put up by Bayan Productions.

'For our rights'

"My SSS records say I'm a regular employee. So why can't they pay me severance pay?" said writer Danny Tamayo. "They just dumped us just like that."

Cameraman Rommel Juaneza said the issue was not all about money. "All of us are just fighting for our rights," he said, adding that he could not imagine the show's producers "dumping us when they no longer need us."

"I have been with De Castro for the last 15 years, and this is how he repays us?" said Juaneza.

Hernal expressed the belief of the show's staff members that they should be largely credited for De Castro's achievements.

"Everything that endeared him (De Castro) to the masses came from his staff," said Hernal.

Said Tamayo: "People come to us asking for help. Why can't we fight for our rights now? We were the ones who crossed rivers, climbed mountains, braved storms and bullets just to get the right stories and perfect [video footage]."

Hernal said he could not recall how many death threats he had received as a result of the stories he had written.

"Noli said he's the voice of the masses. We worked for him for the last 10 to 18 years. Why can't he care for us now? We were the ones who put words into his mouth. Our lives were put at risk most of the time. In our little way, we are part of what he has achieved," Hernal said.

But De Castro said the complainants should not say they were abandoned. He said he was saddened that it had to come to this because, he pointed out, he was able to help them in some way.

"But I welcome the filing of the case against me. That's their right. I'm confident that the truth will come out in the end," he said.

Asked if the filing of the complaint could be politically motivated, De Castro said: "I don't know, but someone is surely egging them on."

US to bankroll peace with Moro rebs

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States says it will provide funds to reintegrate rebels from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front if it signs a peace accord to end a three-decade long revolt.

The Philippine government could sign the peace treaty with the MILF as early as this year, ending a rebellion waged since 1978 by Moro rebels.

Washington had provided economic aid to a program that helped re-integrate former combatants of another large Muslim separatist group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which signed a peace treaty with Manila in 1996.

The United States hopes "to offer a similar program if another major Muslim insurgent group signs a peace accord with the Philippine government," said Kristie Kenney, President George W. Bush's nominee to be the new US ambassador to Manila.

Kenney, speaking at her confirmation hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Tuesday, was referring to the 12,000-strong separatist group MILF that signed a ceasefire with the government in 2003.

She did not provide details of the prospective funding.

Malaysia is hosting peace talks between the administration of Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and the MILF leadership.

A Philippine negotiating panel is expected to fly to Kuala Lumpur shortly to resume talks that began about two years ago with the ceasefire signing.

The MILF has also promised to help flush out foreign Islamic militants believed hiding in Mindanao, where it has been fighting for an independent state.

The militants are believed to be linked to the Jemaah Islamiyah extremist network, which reportedly is the Southeast Asian chapter of the al-Qaida terror network.

Kenney, the former US Ambassador to Ecuador and who had previously held senior positions at the State Department and National Security Council in Washington, said she wanted to enhance US ties with the Philippines, including in cooperation in the US-led "war on terror."

The United States currently trains Philippine troops battling the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group, another al-Qaida linked organization which operates in the southern tip of the archipelago.

Bilateral relations took a hit recently over a tug-of-war on the custody of four US Marines accused of involvement in a rape of a 22-year-old Filipino woman.

Washington rejected a request by Manila to hand over the soldiers, citing a treaty allowing for US custody until the case was concluded.

But a group of Philippine lawmakers called for the scrapping of the treaty that they said gives visiting US servicemen undue protection when they commit crimes in the Philippines.

The United States is the largest investor in the Philippines and top trading partner. More than 125,000 US citizens reside in the Philippines while about two million Filipino-Americans live in the United States.

"I believe our historic relationship with the Philippines will continue to flourish as we pursue our common vision of peace, stability, and prosperity," Kenney told the Senate hearing.

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UP study finds toxic heavy metals near Lafayette mine

From page A1

Lafayette was fined. There were also heavy metals which the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should also look into," said Januar Ong, CEC's head of the research project.

The DENR fined Lafayette P10.7 million in January for the spillage of mine tailings on Rapu-Rapu Island last Oct. 11 and Oct. 31.

Unreliable study

Lafayette said it was not using mercury in its operations.

"We do not have a copy of the so-called UP study this unknown militant group is using but we are confident we can challenge these findings using an independent third party. At best, this study is unreliable and unscientific," Lafayette said in a statement.

Results of the tests have sparked concerns that mining on the island has released naturally occurring heavy metals into the soil, air and water. Heavy metals are not used in the processing of mineral ore at Rapu-Rapu.

A sediment sample near one of the spill sites was found to contain mercury at 0.999 part per million (ppm), exceeding the government's industrial waste standard of 0.20 ppm.

"We should not be concerned about whether they meet the standard or not. Lafayette is not supposed to release toxic metals into the air or water," Ong said at a press conference.

Lafayette said samples of Rapu Rapu water taken on Jan. 6 and 19 passed the government's strict cyanide standards. "This is why the dates the samples were taken are very critical here," it said.

Third party analysis

Lafayette also said that the UP National Science Research Institute (NSRI) was examining water samples taken in Rapu Rapu only on Jan. 26.

"The UP team was with scientists from the Department of Science and Technology, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and representatives from 40 groups representing Sorsogon and Albay organizations. The water samples were split with Lafayette which will have another third party do a parallel analysis," Lafayette said.

It said the impending UP NSRI findings would be the most reliable source of information on this matter.

"Since a new management took over Lafayette about two weeks ago, its focus has been at least full compliance with all the rules and requirements to ensure responsible and sustainable mining operations and the protection of the environment and the host communities," the company said.

CBCP's call

The release of the CEC study followed calls by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for a repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, which allows foreign companies to exploit the country's resources through large-scale mining operations.

In a pastoral statement released on Sunday, the CBCP urged the President to recall all approved mining concessions and disapprove pending applications for mining projects.

The bishops said the Mining Act of 1995 "threatens people's health and environmental safety through the wanton dumping of waste and tailings in rivers and sees."

They also said that communities affected by mining were increasingly subjected to human rights violations.

Remain firm

The CEC has backed the bishops' request for President Macapagal-Arroyo to overturn the Mining Act of 1995 and told the CBCP to remain united in ending large-scale mining in the Philippines.

"We're calling for the CBCP to remain firm in its decision because we know there are pressures from Malacañang," said Trixie Concepcion, spokesperson for environmental activist alliance Defend Patrimony.

A group of activist-scientists said the mining law would not lead to industrialization.

"The Mining Act does not seek to develop local downstream industries that will enable the country to process raw mineral ores into finished products. Rather, it seeks to relegate the country into a mere provider of raw materials for the international markets," said Agham secretary general Trixie Concepcion.

She said the law would increase environmental destruction and accelerate poverty in the countryside.

Assurance

The CBCP statement has prompted a mining company to assure the public that it was committed to protecting the rights of local communities and indigenous people in Tampakan Copper-Gold Project in South Cotabato.

"Since SMI took over the project in 2002, it has undertaken numerous significant environmental and community development activities in the project area," Paul Dominguez, president of Sagittarius Mines Inc., said.

Dominguez said the company was proud of its record in maintaining its environmental, safety, and social programs.

"SMI has a standing policy to arrange briefings and visits for concerned sectors to see for themselves the measures that we have taken to ensure sustainable development for the project," he said. *Reports from David A. Hayes and Christine Gaylican*

Fertilizer fund traced to solon's foundation

From page A1

Per SEC records, its president, Wilfredo Camomot, was Yapha's speechwriter, who died of cardiac arrest on Aug. 23, 2004.

The other incorporators—Ofelio Puno, Abundio Elle and Monico Baron—are either related to or working for Yapha.

When the INQUIRER dialed the number, it turned out to be the phone of Yapha's clinic cum district office at the Visayas Community Medical Center on Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City.

The woman who answered the phone was Nida Ordeniza, who said she was Yapha's secretary.

Asked if she was connected with the Kasosyo Foundation, Ordeniza said she had no knowledge of it. But when the INQUIRER mentioned Camomot's name, she became evasive and said she could not answer questions because she was eating.

The INQUIRER called again about 30 minutes later, but a male staff member said Ordeniza had left.

According to Naring Capa, a cashier of the Yapha-owned bus company Jegans Liner, Puno is a relative of the lawmaker and also works as a cashier at Jegans.

Elle is in charge of the maintenance of the tires of the company buses, and Baron is the driver of Yapha's son, Pinamungahan Mayor Jeffrey Yapha, Capa said.

No rice farms in district

On Tuesday in Manila, DA officials admitted at the Senate budget hearing that the districts of three Cebu administration lawmakers were among the beneficiaries of the P544 million in recovered Marcos money originally intended for the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The fund was released purportedly to ensure President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory in the 2004 election.

Yapha yesterday confirmed that Camomot was his close friend and speechwriter. But he disclaimed knowledge that the latter had formed a foundation or used his office as its address.

He said he did not know why his employees were included in the list of incorporators: "I don't know anything about that. They decided [to form the foundation] on their own."

Yapha said that his conscience was clear, and that there was no irregularity in the implementation of the project.

Asked why he received the money when there were no rice farms in his district, Yapha said the fertilizer was made available not just to rice farmers but also to those planting corn and other crops.

He said he did not even know the fund existed until DA regional director Eduardo Lecciones phoned him shortly before the 2004 elections to tell him about the appropriation.

Yapha said Lecciones phoned him again days after the elections to tell him that his P3-million share of the fund had arrived and that it would be used to buy fertilizer.

He said he told Lecciones to coordinate with his office in distributing the fertilizer to the farmers in his district.

He claimed not to know who the recipients were because it was Lecciones who had the list of beneficiaries.

Lecciones himself said there was nothing irregular in his coursing the fertilizer fund through Kasosyo. He said it had the "track record" and had complied with all requirements as a DA-accredited project implementor.

According to Lecciones, Kasosyo has been implementing DA projects since 2003.

He said the beneficiaries were engaged in crop farming.

Kasosyo-distributed

As for the share of Rep. Antonio Cuenco, farmers in at least 14 mountain villages in Cebu City received the fertilizer, Lecciones said.

He said the fertilizer meant for Cuenco's district was also distributed by Kasosyo, but Cuenco yesterday denied knowledge of it.

Lecciones, however, insisted he had told Cuenco about the arrangement with Kasosyo.

Rep. Simeon Kintanar, on the other hand, admitted that P3 million was appropriated for his district but that only 60 percent (equivalent to almost P2 million) was released.

Kintanar said the money went directly to the Office of Mayor Wilfredo Caminero of Argao town.

He said Caminero handled the procurement of Grandeur fertilizer because farmers supposedly did not know how to use liquid fertilizer.

Kintanar said he was informed about the fertilizer fund prior to the elections but did not receive it until after the polls.

Surprise witnesses

In Manila, the Senate sees a more extensive investigation of the misuse of some P2.8 billion in DA funds even as the committee on agriculture resumes today its inquiry into the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

"The investigation will spill over into the disbursement of the P544-million fund and the P1.102-billion fund (GMA Rice and Corn Livestock Programs)," Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. said.

He said Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Sergio Osmeña III wanted to dig deeper into the management of the DA funds outside of the P728-million fund, all released before the May 2004 elections.

Some "surprises witnesses," including an elected official, are expected to appear at the 10 a.m. hearing today of the committee on agriculture on the alleged mismanagement of the P728-million fertilizer fund.

"We'll have material witnesses who will let us know how the process of the transactions on fertilizer fund was done and how the funds were disposed of," Magsaysay, chair of the investigating committee, told reporters.

"[It] will be one of the more important hearings despite the fact that Mr. Bolante is not coming, but there are few surprise witnesses," Magsaysay said.

He was referring to former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Jocjoc" Bolante, the alleged chief architect of the P728-million fertilizer fund program, who had been cited in contempt and ordered arrested in December for snubbing the hearings.

Non-CARP farmers

Also yesterday, the INQUIRER obtained a copy of a DA report (for the dry season cropping from November 2004 to April 2005) showing that most (80 percent) of the beneficiaries of the P544 million used for the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani hybrid rice program were nonagrarian reform farmers.

Of the 130,079 farmers who availed themselves of the seeds distributed under the program, 104,795 were nonagrarian reform beneficiaries and the rest, agrarian reform beneficiaries.

And of the number of bags of seeds distributed, 170,581 went to nonagrarian reform beneficiaries, and 43,943 to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The biggest number of nonagrarian reform farmer-beneficiaries was in Regions II (23,183) and III (21,354), while the biggest number of agrarian reform farmer-beneficiaries was in Region II (10,959) and the Cordillera Administrative Region (4,242), according to the report.

Frisco Malabanan, GMA hybrid rice program director, on Tuesday confirmed to Drilon that the majority of the beneficiaries of the P544 million were nonagrarian reform beneficiaries.

The inclusion of the nonagrarian reform farmers as beneficiaries could be a violation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, Drilon said.

Bounty for Bolante

Magsaysay said that from P20,000 in seed money, the reward he had put up for the immediate arrest of Bolante reached the P100,000 mark at noon yesterday.

"It shows the pent-up frustration and passion of Filipinos to arrive at the truth. And this becomes the vehicle," he said.

Magsaysay's committee served anew subpoenas on Agriculture Undersecretary Belinda Gonzales, Assistant Secretary Felix Jose Montes and former Assistant Secretary Ibarra Poloquit, among others, for today's hearing.

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300 camp out at Manny's gate waiting for 'balato'

From page A1

boxer Erik Morales earned him a huge prize money.

For three days, about 300 people, some of them coming from as far as Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur, have stayed outside Pacquiao's house in Barangay Labangal.

They said they would only go home if Pacquiao showed up.

To ensure they would not miss any tip once Pacquiao shows up, the fans are conducting nightly vigils.

As of yesterday, the country's boxing sensation has not granted the requests of his fans.

It could not be confirmed where Pacquiao has been staying since his return from the United States.

Pacquiao's mother, Dionisia, spoke over a local radio station and asked for understanding.

She said it was true that his son made some money from the fight and from the live telecast on a pay-per-view channel. But Manny, she said, "has yet to receive anything."

"He even borrowed money from his manager. You should understand that it is not easy to bring home such amount," Dionisia said.

Estimates of Pacquiao's actual net income from his bout with Morales vary.

Some say he became $2 million richer from the prize money alone, but others claim it would actually be a little over $300,000 after taxes and other deductions.

Dionisia said her son was always ready to share his blessings.

Former boxing champion Rolando Navarrete got P1,000 when he patiently trailed the float carrying Pacquiao during a rousing welcome ceremony for the latter last week.

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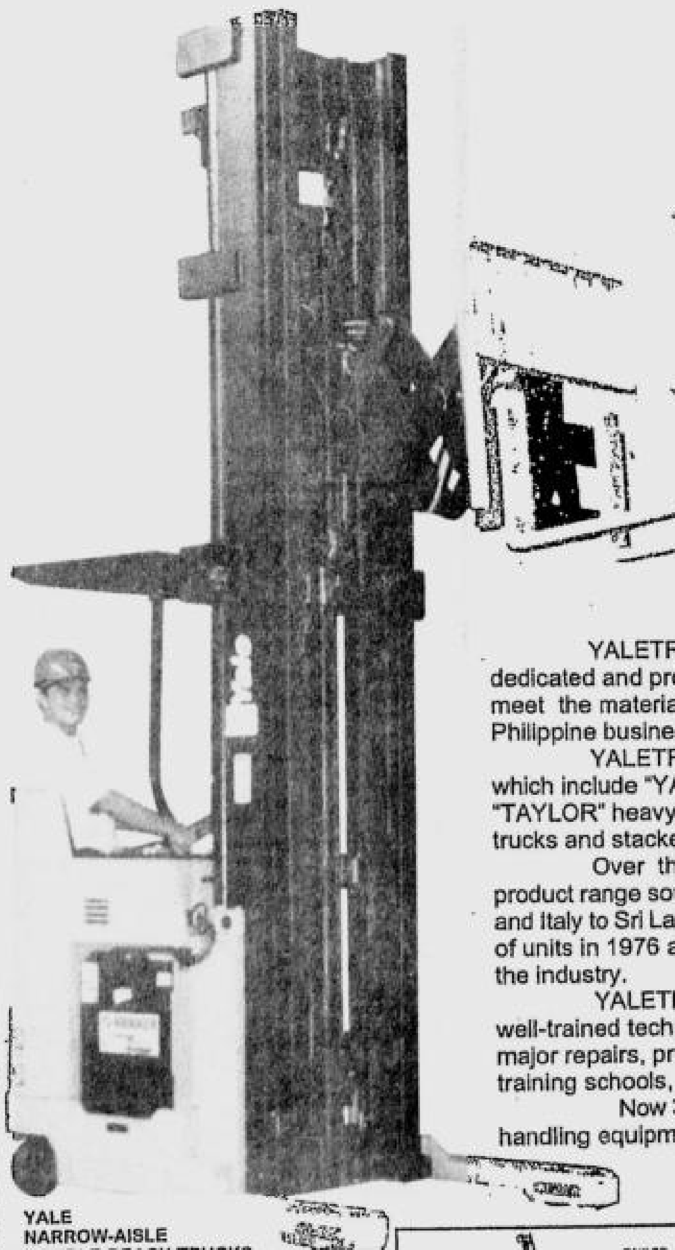

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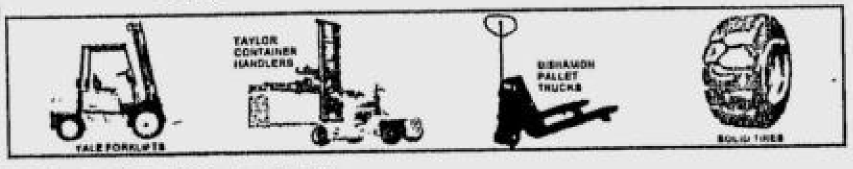

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Iran threatens to stop UN nuke inspections

TEHRAN—THE CRISIS OVER IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS deepened Tuesday as Tehran signaled it would end cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog at the weekend and the United States warned of a miscalculation.

Iran will cease cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) watchdog on Saturday if it refers the country's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said.

"There is no difference between informing the Security Council and referring (the case) to it," Mottaki said.

"In either case, if the dossier is sent to the Security Council, Iran will cease voluntary cooperation (with the IAEA) from Saturday Feb. 4."

Any such step would be an "additional miscalculation" that would isolate Iran further in the international community," US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns told reporters, a day after the five permanent members of the UN Security Council agreed to report Iran to the body over its nuclear program.

"It's extraordinary that a country under the international spotlight responds to a united call from the P-5 (permanent five UN Security Council members) for diplomacy they would respond by these further unilateral actions. It would be another miscalculation."

The diplomat said he was buoyed by the united front put forward by Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States on the issue, saying it paved the way for a "resounding vote" at the IAEA board of governors' next meeting later this week.

US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice said she was satisfied with the agreement reached in London Monday night on referring the Iran dossier to the Security Council, though no action would be taken before March when IAEA Director General Mohammed ElBaradei is to due to report on Tehran's compliance with its obligations.

She said the deal did not mean the end of differences between China and Russia on the one hand and the West on the other.

"I don't underestimate the difficulty of maintaining a consensus as we go into this process," she said on board the plane taking her from London to Washington.

"I expect there is going to continue to be tactical differences about timing, there will be tactical differences about precisely what is required. But that is the hard work of diplomacy."

In Tehran Mottaki reiterated Iran's insistence that it would carry on with its renewed nuclear research.

"We have told everyone with whom we have discussed this that there is no question of our re-suspending our nuclear research activities. That is irreversible. It must be stated that nuclear research is different than industrial production of combustible material."

Mottaki said that any decision to involve the Security Council could affect the "Russian plan," under which Iran is being urged to agree to conduct any enrichment activities in Russia.

"I told the Russian foreign minister that going the way of the Security Council could endanger the 'Russian plan' itself.

"Neither the United States nor any other power can oblige other countries to accept just anything under threat," he added.

The Iranian government has handed over to the IAEA a document whose only use would be in making nuclear weapons parts, the IAEA said in a confidential report obtained Tuesday by AFP. *AFP*

S. Korea widens criminal probe of tainted scientists

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREAN PROSECUTORS have widened their criminal probe of a team led by a disgraced scientist to see if a bioethics law was breached by illegally purchasing human eggs, a prosecution source said on Wednesday.

Prosecutors have already launched a criminal probe of the team led by Hwang Woo-suk on suspicion of fraudulently using state funds.

Hwang's team intentionally fabricated key data in two landmark papers on human embryonic stem cells that have since been debunked, a Seoul National University panel said.

Bioethics law

Hwang's research had raised hopes because it seemed to hasten the day when genetically specific tissue could be grown from embryonic stem cells to repair damaged organs or treat diseases such as Parkinson's.

"We will focus on the team's acquisition of ova after the life science ethics law took effect in 2005," the prosecution source, who declined to be named, said by telephone.

South Korea enacted a bioethics law in January 2005 aimed at raising ethical standards in stem cell research and ensuring the country's research met global practices.

The law allows for therapeutic cloning for embryonic stem cell research, but bans human cloning. It prohibits the commercial trade in ova or sperm, providing punishment of up to three years in jail for brokers and up to two years for donors.

Fraudulently using state funds can carry a jail term of up to 10 years.

Hwang was once hailed as a hero in South Korea, but trouble started to mount for him last November when media reports circulated saying junior researchers had given their own human eggs for his team's research.

Unethical

Donations of this type by research associates are considered unethical because of the possibility of coercion.

Hwang at first said he did not know of the donations but later admitted he was aware of them.

The university investigation panel said that Hwang actually accompanied one of the research associates himself to the hospital for a donation.

The investigation panel also said Hwang's team used more human ova than they had claimed in their research.

It said women were paid for their donations, which would not necessarily have been illegal if the payments took place before the 2005 bioethics law was enacted.

South Korean auditors questioned Hwang last Friday as part of a separate investigation into whether his team misused state funds.

The team got 41.7 billion won ($43.41 million) in state funds from 1995 to 2005, the Board of Audit and Inspection said.

South Korean media said prosecutors may question Hwang some time this month as part of their probe.

Prosecutors have said they are also looking into Hwang's claims he was the victim of a conspiracy to discredit him.

At a news conference last month, Hwang apologized for the fraud in the papers, but laid the blame for the fabrications at the feet of junior researchers in his team. *Reuters*

New planet is bigger than Pluto, says study

PARIS—FOR MORE THAN SEVEN decades, schoolchildren have been taught that tiny, lonely Pluto is the outermost of the nine planets that orbit the Sun.

A big hole has now been bashed into that cherished piece of learning, for astronomers have determined that Pluto is much smaller than an enigmatic object, 2003 UB313, whose discoverers claim is the solar system's 10th planet.

UB313, found some 15 billion km from Earth, ignited a huge row after its finding was announced last July 30 by an American team.

Pluto's defenders blasted UB313, saying it was not a planet ... but a vulgar rock.

The polite term for such abuse is a KBO—Kuiper Belt Object—for the estimated 100,000 pieces of icy, primeval debris that slowly encircle the Sun on the outskirts of the Solar System, far beyond the orbit of Neptune.

The UB313 supporters' club responded tartly, claiming that if anything deserved the moniker of KBO, it was Pluto.

For one thing, Pluto, discovered in 1930 by American Clyde Tombaugh, has a weird, unplanetary orbital plane. It is a whole 17 degrees off the horizontal plane taken by the eight other planets.

In addition, its path around the Sun is so egg-shaped that, for 20 years of its 248-year orbit, is inside the track of Neptune itself.

Now, weighing powerfully in this group's favor, are the first detailed measurements of UB313's size.

If the data are accepted by a special 19-member panel set up by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) to determine what constitutes a planet, Pluto faces being booted out of the solar system's elite club, and downgraded to a mere KBO.

Either that, or the planetary list will have to expand to include UB313 and possibly many others.

In a study published on Thursday in Nature, astronomers led by Frank Bertoldi of the University of Bonn in Germany say they have measured reflected solar radiation from UB313, using a 30-meter telescope in Spain, to get a yardstick of its size.

The result: UB313 has a diameter of about 3,000 km, which would make it the largest solar system object to be spotted since the discovery of Neptune in 1846. *AFP*

Moscow ready to work with all-Hamas gov't

MOSCOW—RUSSIA IS READY TO WORK with the new leadership of the Palestinian Authority, even if it is made up exclusively of Hamas, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday, according to the Interfax news agency.

Lavrov, who was in London for international talks over the Iranian nuclear threat and the situation in the Middle East, said Russia would not reject the new Palestinian leadership, whatever it is.

"We do not reject relations with the new Palestinian leadership, whether it is with the parliament or with the government that the parliament forms," he said.

"It is very likely that there will be some sort of coalition," said Lavrov. "But we cannot exclude the possibility of an all-Hamas government."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier Tuesday that the international community should continue to help the Palestinians in spite of Hamas' win in last week's legislative elections.

Putin also stressed that Russia's position on Hamas differed from that taken by the United States and the European Union.

"Our foreign ministry has never described Hamas as a terrorist organization," he said. This difference however did not mean that Hamas could expect Russia's unqualified support.

"Hamas must leave its radical declarations, must recognize Israel's right to exist and normalize contact with the international community," the Russian leader said. *AFP*

APOLOGY

SCENT CATERING SERVICES apologizes to newlyweds Engr. Rodel Legaspi and Dr. Jovie M. Legaspi, DDM; to their parents, relatives and guests for the "bad service" they experienced during their wedding reception on January 7,2006 at the Portico de Gracia in Kawit, Cavite.

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Lies, conspiracy cited at Enron CEOs' trial

HOUSTON, TEXAS—THE SPECtacular collapse of Enron was debated in court for the first time Tuesday, with a prosecutor blaming "lies" by its chief executives and defense lawyers calling it a tragedy of the marketplace.

Opening statements from the prosecution and defense launched the much-awaited trial of Kenneth Lay, 63, and Jeffrey Skilling, 52, accused of masterminding a massive fraud at the energy giant that led to its 40 billion dollar meltdown in 2001. The first witnesses were set to testify Wednesday.

"This is a simple case. It is not about accounting. It is about lies and choices," assistant US attorney John Hueston told the federal court jury of eight women and four men.

He said that Lay and Skilling, "two men at the helm of the company, told lie after lie about the company's financial condition" to enrich themselves even as the company was on the brink of imploding.

But Michael Ramsey, lead attorney for Lay, said the Enron saga was "almost Greek-like in its tragic proportion," and maintained that the failure was due to the "loss of trust" in a bear market. He insisted that Lay was devoted to the company he had founded, up to the end.

"He did not try to kill his own child, which was Enron, and he did not lie," said Ramsey, arguing that authorities were seeking to criminalize everyday business decisions.

"Ken Lay has and will continue to accept responsibility for the bankruptcy of Enron," Ramsey said.

"He was the man at the controls at the time the company failed ... but failure is not a crime. Bankruptcy is not a crime." Ramsey said Enron's failure came as partners cut off credit after losing confidence in the firm.

"The odor of the wolf got into the flock and the flock stampeded," he said.

The defense lawyer said many of the problems could be traced back to chief financial officer Andrew Fastow, seen as the architect of Enron's special entities to keep debts hidden off its balance sheet.

Fastow "was a wonderful financial guy; he was a crook, he was a thief," Ramsey said, while mocking the notion that Fastow had "handshake" deals with Enron's top executives.

"If it's not in writing, it doesn't count," he said.

Fastow was sentenced to ten years in jail in 2004 after pleading guilty to wire and securities fraud and agreeing to cooperate with the prosecutions of other Enron executives.

Skilling's lawyer Daniel Petrocelli said that the evidence would show there was no "massive criminal conspiracy" as prosecutors alleged, but a "tragedy" of a cash crunch that led to the company's failure.

"It wasn't a case of 'see no evil, hear no evil,' it was a case of there was no evil." Both Lay and Skilling have indicated they will testify during the trial, which culminates a four-year investigation into a case that for many symbolizes corporate misdeeds and excess greed.

Petrocelli said Skilling was eager to defend himself in the case.

"This man will take the stand," he said. "He will tell you in his own words how much he loved this company, how he built this company, and how he would never do anything to hurt this company." Hueston said the prosecution would show the multitude of schemes and deceptions used by Enron and its top executives to make the company's financial condition appear sound despite massive losses.

"To the outside world, Enron appeared to be a picture of corporate success... a seemingly magical ability to make earnings growth of 15 to 20 percent year after year," he said. "But inside the doors of Enron, something was terribly wrong." Hueston described the company transferring losses from its money-losing retail energy operation to another division to hide them; using phony deals to sell assets such as troubled power plants; and engaging in so-called "earnings management," tapping reserves improperly to make profit targets.

Lay and Skilling, the prosecutor said, knew about the fiascoes Enron faced in some ventures such as water treatment, high-speed Internet, retail energy and international power generation, but kept investors and analysts in the dark.

Hueston said both men enriched themselves while leaving investors in the dark.

He said that from 1999 to 2001, Skilling received some $150 million and Lay over $200 million, much of it in the form of Enron stock, and that the value of their compensation was tied to that of Enron's stock.

The first witness set to testify Wednesday was Mark Koenig, who had been investor relations chief for Enron and who has pleaded guilty to securities fraud charges in exchange for his cooperation. He will be followed by Kenneth Rice, who headed Enron's wholesale energy division.

AFP

ROBOT DOG
A puppy plays with a remote-controlled toy robot dog "Robopet" at a hotel in Seoul, Feb. 1. AFP

Iraq kidnappers set deadline for German hostages

DUBAI—THE KIDNAPPERS OF TWO GERMAN hostages held in Iraq said they would kill their captives within 72 hours unless Germany ended cooperation with Iraq and closed its Baghdad Embassy, Al Jazeera television said on Tuesday.

A new tape of the hostages showed them next to masked individuals who pointed automatic rifles at them. It was dated Jan. 29.

The hostage takers were from the Ansar al-Tawhid Wa-Sunna militant group, Jazeera said, adding that the group also demanded that all German companies leave Iraq.

The two engineers, identified in German media reports as Rene Braeunlich and Thomas Nitzschke, were abducted last Tuesday outside their workplace in the Iraqi industrial town of Baiji, 180 km north of Baghdad.

They appeared in a video on Friday urging their government to help secure their release and at the time German Chancellor Angela Merkel vowed to do all she could to free them.

"The pictures are testimony to a crime that shows a contempt for humanity. Experts from the foreign ministry crisis group are examining the pictures carefully," said a German foreign ministry spokesperson on Tuesday.

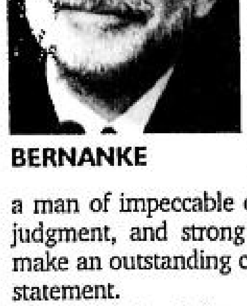
Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was being kept informed of developments and a crisis group would report to cabinet on Wednesday morning, a statement by the foreign ministry said after news of the tape was broadcast on German TV.

Reuters

Bernanke named new Fed chair

WASHINGTON—THE US SENATE ON TUESday confirmed Ben Bernanke, the top White House economic advisor, to be the new chair of the Federal Reserve, succeeding the US central bank's revered outgoing chief Alan Greenspan.

Bernanke, who was approved by a voice vote of lawmakers, became the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers in June. In October President George W. Bush nominated him to succeed Greenspan, who stepped down after 18 years at the helm of the Fed.

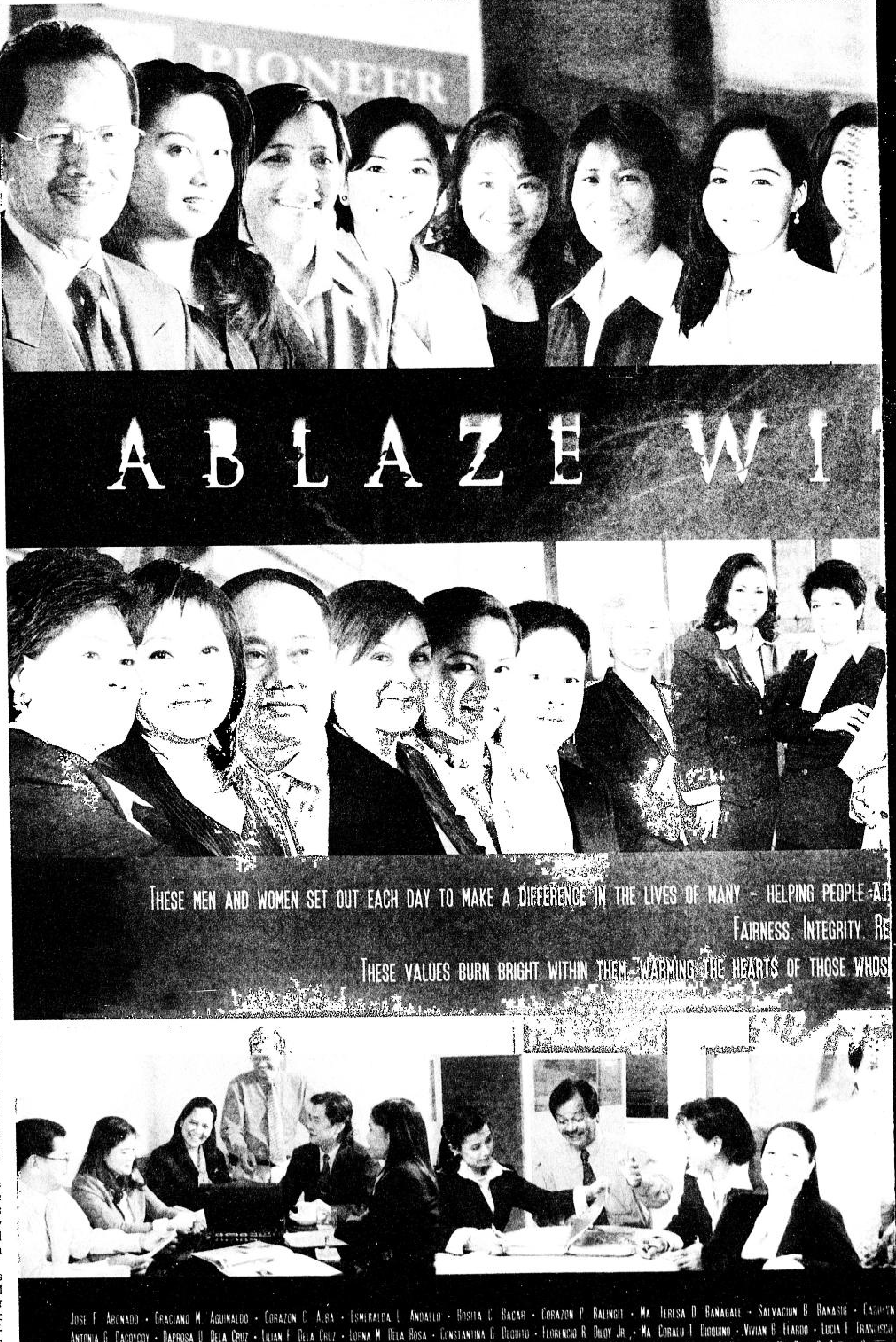


BERNANKE

The president said he was pleased with the Senate approval. "Ben is a man of impeccable credentials, sound policy judgment, and strong character—and he will make an outstanding chairman," Bush said in a statement.

A former head of economics at the prestigious Princeton University, Bernanke returns to the Fed after a 2002-2005 stint as a governor under Greenspan. He brings decades of academic thinking to bear when he succeeds Greenspan after his swearing-in Wednesday. On a day when an acrimonious Senate fractured along party lines in confirming conservative judge Samuel Alito as the newest Supreme Court justice, it was a testament to Bernanke that lawmakers dispensed with a roll call vote on his nomination.

AFP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Afghans win aid, military pledges

LONDON—AFGHANISTAN RECEIVED PROmises of economic and military support from the international community at a conference in London on Tuesday in return for pledges to fight corruption and the illegal opium trade.

Four years after the US-backed campaign which ousted the hardline Islamist Taliban, Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries and security is a major obstacle to development in the central Asian nation.

The meeting will formalize a five-year plan, known as the Afghanistan Compact, to tackle illegal armed groups, impose the rule of law, work towards the eradication of opium production and enforce a zero-tolerance policy on corruption.

"The goals which we have set are ambitious but they are achievable and if we reach them we will be making a real difference on the ground to the lives of many millions," British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told a news conference.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the Bush administration would seek approval for $1.1 billion of aid for the Afghan people in the next year, on top of aid commitments of nearly $6 billion. British Prime Minister Tony Blair pledged 500 million pounds ($885 million) over the next three years. But a Taliban leader condemned the gathering as an "American drama and stage show" and warned that the Taliban would continue attacking Western forces in the country.

"In Afghanistan, armed jihadi and suicide attacks against America, Britain and their agents will continue," Mullah Abdullah Akhund, deputy to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, told Reuters by satellite telephone.

Officials have blamed Taliban and al-Qaida militants for a string of attacks, including 13 suicide bombings, since November.

The United States helped Afghan forces oust the Taliban in 2001 after they refused to hand over al-Qaida leaders responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York and Washington.

The country now has a constitution, an elected president and a parliament despite violence in the south and east where 18,000 US troops are helping government forces fight insurgents.

Nato is preparing to double the size of its force in Afghanistan to 18,000 from 9,000 and expand into the dangerous south while the United States cuts its troop levels. Britain announced last week it would send an additional 3,300 troops.

But one of the major challenges for Afghanistan will be to crack down on the opium trade, which accounts for about half of the country's economy.

Afghanistan is the world's biggest source of illicit opium.

It's refined heroin accounts for about 87 percent of global supply and many farmers depend on revenue from the drug.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said his people had turned to growing opium poppies during three decades of desperation and it would take years to eradicate the trade.

"Let us recognize that this is a tough fight," he said. "Afghanistan will need at least 10 years of strong, systematic consistent effort in eradication, in law enforcement and in the provision to the Afghan farmer of an alternative economy." One former Afghan minister said billions of dollars of aid that have poured into the country have done little to improve people's lives, and that sweeping personnel changes in government and aid agencies were needed. *Reuters*

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Alito sworn in as newest justice

WASHINGTON—JUDGE SAMUEL ALITO was sworn in as a US Supreme Court justice Tuesday, becoming the second of President George W. Bush's nominees to be confirmed and tipping the court decidedly rightward.

The Republican-dominated Senate earlier Tuesday confirmed conservative judge Alito by a near party-line 58 to 42 vote.

Alito, 55, a federal appeals court judge, has taken the seat vacated by departing justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was the first woman ever seated on the court.

ALITO

Alito took the oath in a brief ceremony at the Supreme Court, just hours before the president was to deliver his annual State of the Union speech in Congress, which the new justice was to attend. A White House ceremony in Alito's honor is to take place Wednesday, at which he is to take his oath a second time.

Bush on Tuesday said he was "pleased" by the Senate's endorsement of Alito, whom he described as a "brilliant and fair-minded judge." "He is a man of deep character and integrity, and he will make all Americans proud as a justice on our highest court," Bush said.

Although he cleared his confirmation vote by a comfortable margin, Alito garnered fewer votes than any Supreme Court justice since Clarence Thomas. Thomas was confirmed in 1991. Despite the lack of bipartisan support for Alito, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist hailed the confirmation as a major triumph for Bush. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Saddam trial boycott

AMMAN—The chief lawyer in the defense team representing former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said on Wednesday that the defense will not appear in court until newly selected chief judge Raouf Abdel Rahman resigns. "We cannot attend any trial session unless the chief judge resigns because he holds a personal grudge against my client," Saddam's chief lawyer Khalil Dulaimi told Reuters on Wednesday. The lawyer said the Kurdish judge could not be impartial because he'd been sentenced twice in absentia by courts under Saddam's rule and was a member of an opposition Kurdish nationalist party. *Reuters*

Indonesia ferry sinks

JAKARTA—An Indonesian ferry carrying 105 people sank in heavy seas in the country's east overnight and naval vessels were searching for survivors, port officials said on Wednesday. A naval vessel had so far rescued 12 people, El Shinta radio said. There were 82 passengers and 23 crew on board the doomed vessel, officials said. The ferry was travelling from Kupang on Indonesia's side of Timor island to nearby Rote island when officials lost contact with it on Tuesday night, officials said. "We can confirm that the ferry has sunk. The weather is pretty friendly right now and rescue crews are doing their job," one Kupang port official, Marthen Manu, told Reuters by telephone. *Reuters*

$485-M bank scam in China

WASHINGTON—US authorities have charged two former Bank of China managers over the theft of more than $485 million which they tried to launder through Las Vegas casinos, officials said Tuesday. Xu Chaofan and Xu Guojun with their wives and one other relative have been charged with racketeering, money laundering and fraud by a federal grand jury in Las Vegas, the Justice Department said. Bank of China is a major state-controlled Chinese commercial bank. The theft has been under investigation by authorities in the United States, Hong Kong, China and Canada for more than two years. The charges said the two managers, with an another executive, moved stolen money through Hong Kong, Canada and the US before settling in the US using sham marriages. The six were detained in October 2004. *AFP*

Blast kills 8 Iraqi laborers

BAGHDAD—A bomb exploded alongside a group of Iraqi men waiting for work in eastern Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least eight and wounding more than 50, police officials said. Col. Ahmed Abboud, chief of police in the New Baghdad area where the explosion happened, cited eyewitnesses saying a man placed a bag full of explosives near a cart that sold tea to the workers. "The people did not suspect him when he first came with the bag because all workers carry their food in bags," Abboud told AP. *AP*

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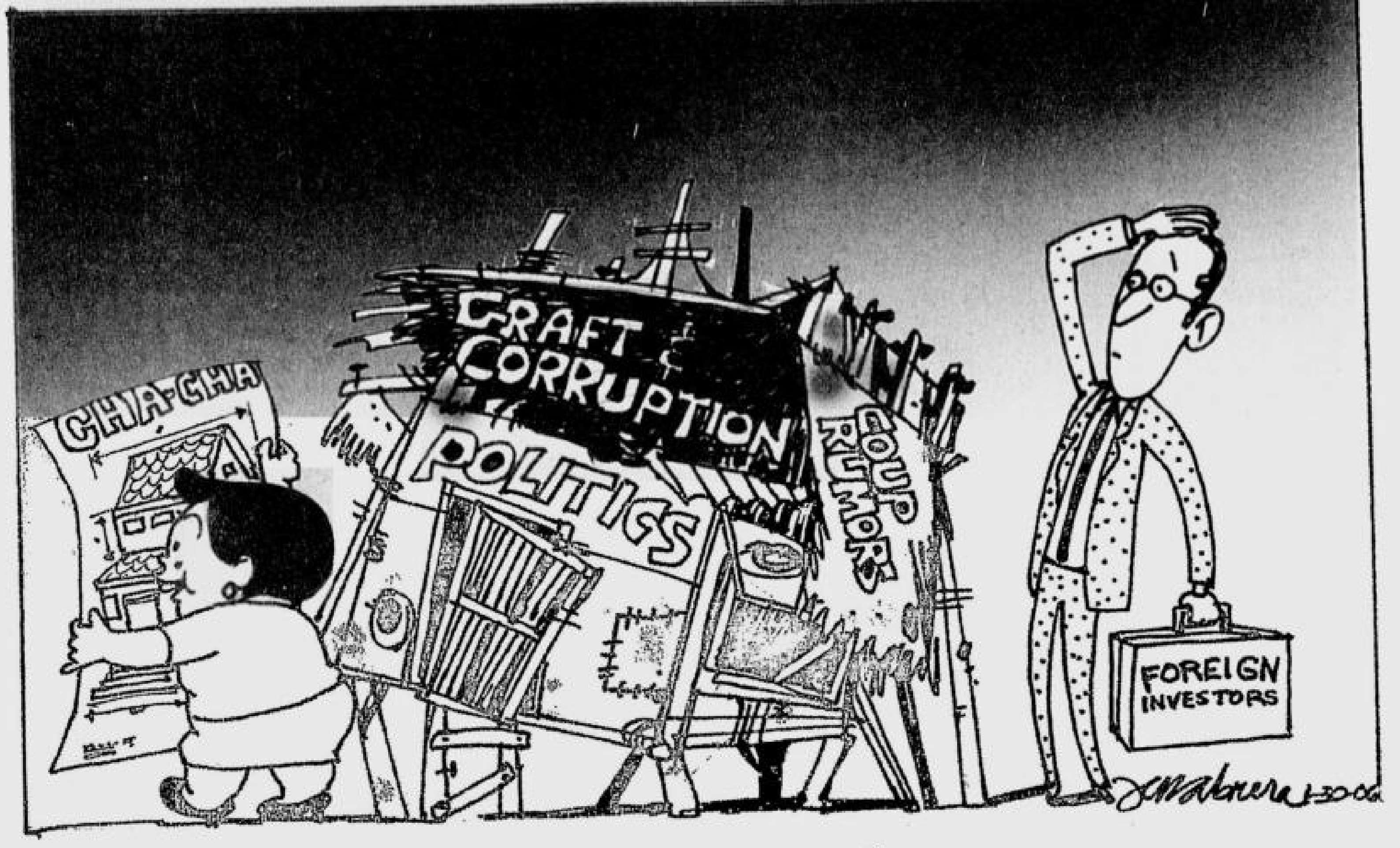

Mission impossible

EDITORIAL

THERE COULD BE NO BETTER PROOF OF THE sheer futility of the new assignment President Macapagal-Arroyo gave to former Chief Justice Hilario Davide than the adamant refusal of Chair Benjamin Abalos and other members of the Commission on Elections to leave their posts. Abalos told the INQUIRER Monday he and four commissioners would not resign because it would make them look guilty. He was reacting to fresh calls for their resignation made by the country's Catholic bishops.

In a pastoral statement issued Sunday, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines underscored the need to restore "confidence and trust in our political processes" in the face of "a crisis of moral values, a crisis of truth and justice" arising from allegations that the Arroyo administration had rigged the 2004 elections. The first step, the bishops said, is to undertake electoral reforms so that the Comelec can be transformed into a "competent and reliable body beyond reproach." And they added: "The call for the resignation or even prosecution of a number of commissioners should not be lightly brushed aside."

That makes the CBCP the third major institution to urge not only the resignation but the prosecution of top Comelec officials. Two years ago, in January 2004, the Supreme Court voided the P1.3-billion computerization contract between the Comelec and Mega Pacific consortium, saying it had been awarded not only "in clear violation of law and jurisprudence but also in reckless disregard of of its [the Comelec's] own bidding rules and procedures." The Court then ordered the Comelec to rescind the contract, and the Office of the Ombudsman to prosecute all the officials involved.

Last December, the Senate blue ribbon committee released a report finding the same contract "egregiously fraudulent." The Senate committee condemned the award of the contract to Mega Pacific as "unparalleled in its brazen and unmitigated transgression of generally accepted norms and conduct of public bidding." In awarding the contract, it said, the election commissioners and members of the Comelec Bids and Awards Committee exhibited "utter irresponsibility" and should therefore "vacate their positions."

Thrice pilloried in public for corruption and incompetence, Abalos and his commissioners continue to cling to their posts. In response to the bishops' recent demand for their resignation, Abalos again sought sanctuary in the glacier-paced investigation being conducted by the Ombudsman. "Yes, there should be an investigation," he said while complaining that "no full-blown trial" was conducted before the Supreme Court voided the contract. He said the Court had rendered its verdict "without an extensive inquiry into the facts."

In other words, Abalos is putting himself above the Supreme Court, free not only to question its decision but to set that decision aside. But if that smacks of defiance, he is simply acting true to form. That is what he has been doing all this time: defying the Court, defying the Senate, defying public opinion which is overwhelmingly disapproving of the Comelec's performance; and now defying Church leaders.

Everyone who has given it a thought (with the possible exception of the President) believes, with the bishops, that the necessary first step toward election reform is the removal of Abalos and company. With all of them remaining on board, no real reform is possible. Getting them out is the first order of business. If three powerful institutions combined with strong public opinion cannot make them relinquish their positions, how can Davide persuade or force them to do so? His new assignment has all the marks of mission impossible.

Another trickster

FOREIGN COMMENT

WITH THE ARREST OF TAKAFUMI HORIE, PRESIDENT OF dotcom sensation Livedoor Co., we find ourselves wondering if the "champion of reform" who led a group with a market value of 1 trillion yen was just another bubble business trickster.

Horie's business strategy was always supported by shady tactics barely within the bounds of law... He had defended such ploys, saying there was nothing wrong with taking advantage of legal loopholes.

However, the allegations suggest otherwise. What he did actually amounts to a grave betrayal of investors' trust.

The scandal has raised many questions that must be examined by society as a whole as well as those for investigators.

Asahi Shimbun (Tokyo)

Newsroom rule

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IN NEWSROOMS, IT'S KNOWN AS THE "SUNshine rule." Editors drum it into cub reporters: "Focus your reports like light—and watch the cockroaches scram."

At the Senate, we saw that rule play out. Sen. Joker Arroyo demanded that the Presidential Commission on Good Government enlighten budget committee members about the secret talks on "a P50-billion settlement with businessman Eduardo Cojuangco" involving the coconut levy.

PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio has a hard-earned reputation for a lifetime of service to the marginalized. But this time, he uncharacteristically opted to scram.

Sabio "refused to answer…whether President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved the negotiations, " the INQUIRER reported. "PCGG is answerable only to the President," he said. Neither would he make pertinent documents available to a body from which he's asking a P67-million budget.

What documents? Is there a draft Amicable Settlement Compromise Agreement now circulating? Does the solicitor general have a finger in this cookie jar? There is an OSG memo on the coco levy saying: the entire Coconut Industry Fund has been invested, "as legally mandated." Really? Or are these talks "a secret in the Oxford sense," as philosopher Oliver Frances once said? "You may tell it to only one person at a time."

Were Sabio's zippered lips just a fit of simple amnesia? In waving Executive Order No. 1, as basis for staying mute, Sabio overlooked the author: then executive secretary Joker Arroyo. "My signature is on that," the senator snapped, adding: EO 1 does not muzzle officials at budget hearings.

Did Sabio recall he taught Ateneo Law School students that the Bill of Rights (Section 7) states: "the right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized"? Ditto for "access to official records"?

An unmistakable mark of democratic society is transparency. Access by citizens to information ensures just governance. "A people without information is a dead people," journalist Rosalina Velasquez writes. And decay also breeds cockroaches.

Authoritarian regimes, in contrast, gag and stonewall. We saw that with Ferdinand Marcos, Idi Amin, Augusto Pinochet, Robert Mugabe and their ilk. As John put it: "Men preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil."

But Sabio is not the first to clam up. Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano wore his gag with aplomb. Military and other officials shoved their agencies into blackout zones. Their pathetic excuse for blinding citizens is President Arroyo's EO 464. It forbids their appearing before congressional probes.

"Deaf and silent, we may be led like lambs to the slaughter," George Washington cautioned his fledging nation. Thus, the Supreme Court is now hearing challenges to EO 464 for striking a whole bureaucracy mute. And the bitter experience with the coconut levy, over the last three decades, shows there is nothing that corrupts more than secrecy.

The coco.levy distilled the greed-blinding excesses of the "New Society." Marcos and his coconut czar Eduardo Cojuangco clamped that tax on—from Presidential Decree 276 to EO 828—while shielded by the dictatorship's censors. The levy enriched the cronies but beggared millions of small farmers. It "devoured the savings of widows and orphans."

There are "more important things," the Book of Accabar says, "than transporting gold to the grave." So, 96 religious leaders, men and women—led by Ricardo Cardinal Vidal—issued in 1996 an open letter stating:

"Levies were taxes imposed on farmers through abuse of state power. These are public funds owned by the Filipino people….That P100 billion is now being claimed and controlled by Marcos cronies."

For almost two decades, cronies clung to the loot as their lawyers argued before the courts: the levy was a private kitty, not a tax. "Must we rewrite our dictionaries?" snapped Cebu Daily News (December 2001). "PCGG's Haydee Yorac and Solicitor General Simeon Marcelo have rightly questioned how can the private sector impose a levy? That'd be extortion."

During Chief Justice Hilario Davide's watch, the courts ruled levies were public funds, which have now swollen to over P130 billion. That's bound to whistle up the predators. *Tiap-tiap siri suba dakua aun buaya niya*, Tausugs say. "There's a crocodile in every big river."

Was the President consulted on the deal? Senator Arroyo asked. No reply. Government had been favored by the Supreme Court decisions, Senator Arroyo pointed out. Wasn't the PCGG snatching defeat from the jaws of victory by lofting settlement bids when it had the upperhand? No reply.

So, the Senate understandably put Sabio's feet to the fire: it scrapped the PCGG's total budget. Still no reply. "No talk, no mistake," the late Sen. Genaro Magsaysay said with engaging candor.

The coconut, scientists say, is the "tree of 999 uses." Fruit, trunk, leaves, everything is utilized. But Marcos and his economic buccaneers discovered the coconut's 1,000th use: they diverted its taxes to line their own pockets.

Now, the same pirates salivate for a rerun of martial law coco levy plunder. And standing against them are Senator Arroyo and like-minded colleagues who, like editors, would apply the "sunshine rule."

President Arroyo's tendency is to choose what most shores up her stay in power. This is less than reassuring. She could sign up with the thieves and find the 1,000th use of the coconut: rewarding those who battened on the poor.

* * *

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Credible alternative

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I AGREE WITH THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' Conference of the Philippines that we should have a credible alternative before we excise Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. But a credible alternative doesn't have to be a person, it can be a process. That isn't a novel idea, that was the case in Edsa II. If the alternative in Edsa II had been GMA, Edsa II would never have happened. GMA was widely distrusted even then, having balked at fighting Erap until it was safe to do. Then she presented herself as the opposite of Erap. As it turned out, not without prophetic irony, she would be the opposite of Erap in the extent to which she would cling to power. In all else, she would be the likeness of Marcos.

That is the reason I disagreed with Cory when she said she regretted delivering such a spawn as GMA, birthing her in Edsa II. I myself do not regret taking part in Edsa II. I believed in Edsa II; I still do. That was a necessary deed, that was a noble deed. What Cory (and Dinky Soliman and Bill Luz) should regret is not Edsa II, it is helping someone who had shown herself to be so hungry for power she would steal the elections to have it. I had no problems recognizing GMA as my President after Edsa II. However much I criticized her, I owed her my taxes as my President. I have every problem recognizing GMA as my President after the 2004 elections. After that, I owed her only my scorn.

I submit the following perfectly credible alternative in response to the CBCP's call. This alternative has three parts:

First, end an illegitimate rule. That is not conditional on any alternative, credible or not. Where there is a crime, there must be punishment. Without that, there is no justice; without that, there is no government. Getting back your cell phone from a thief who stole it is not conditional on your proving you have a credible alternative use for it. The current government is itself an incredible alternative to the democratic norm, which is an elected government. It is the product of a coup, wrought by fraud instead of fear, wrought by gangsters instead of mutineers.

How to end that rule? I myself continue to favor People Power and civil disobedience over anything else. I join the bishops in eschewing violence. But I do not see how anyone can be bound by purely constitutional means to end a purely unconstitutional government. I do know one thing, which is that you cannot end that rule by trying to embarrass its wielders. The devil himself may quote the Scriptures to suit his purposes, and liars themselves may quote truth to serve their purposes. I'm not surprised that GMA, Mike Defensor, Ignacio Bunye and Garci agree with the bishops that truth must be pursued relentlessly. GMA was the one who promised she would not run again; Bunye was the one who produced the "Hello Garci" tape and blamed it on others; Defensor was the one who kidnapped Ping Lacson's witness against Pidal and called it a rescue; and Garci, well, you have an embarrassment of riches there. Liars will lie even about lying.

Second, hold elections as soon as possible. To repeat, hold elections only after GMA is gone, not before. She cannot be part of the elections, she is the whole of the problem. The logic is simple and inescapable: The voters were robbed of their vote, the voters should get back their vote. Like I said, the "who" is the easiest to answer: The one who should govern is the one the people vote for.

What this means is that any transitional or caretaker council may not exist beyond a few months, it may exist only for the purpose of preparing for elections. I personally think no more than six months. An unelected council that exists beyond that will not usher in reforms, it will usher in tyranny. All that council has to do is line up the current Comelec commissioners in the Luneta, metaphorically speaking, and computerize canvassing. And fly in international observers to observe the elections. Those who say that doesn't go very far reform-wise would do well to recollect Churchill's words: Democracy is a wretched system; it's just that all others are worse.

Third, establish a Truth Commission. I submit though that in lieu of the kind of Truth Commission Alfonsin created in Argentina and Mandela in South Africa after the rule of the generals and apartheid respectively, we establish a Truth Commission that will investigate not the torture wrought by the ousted regime but the lies it perpetrated. I suggest a Truth Commission in its most literal sense, one that would ferret out the truth and punish the liars.

At the very least that is so because the order of lies that has been unleashed upon the country is not the kind that merely hurts it, it is the kind that destroys it. The day we accept the "Hello Garci" tape (whose complete authenticity was proved beyond a shadow of doubt by GMA herself, when she called up Pacquiao to say "Hello Manny"—truly God plays tricks on this country!) as "a lapse in judgment" is the day we stop being a country. We have no reason to exist, we have reason only to subsist, by foraging in distant lands. That would be the true lapse in judgment, one that history will punish severely.

At the very most, that is so because we need to stem the tide of deceit and dishonesty that is turning this country into a country of thieves. We need a Truth Commission not only to see the truth about our tyrants, we need it to see the truth about ourselves. We need a Truth Commission not only to see the truth about what our leaders have done to us, we need it to see the truth about what we have become. The Truth shall set you free: Never has that Biblical injunction sounded truer.

Truth is always a credible alternative to lie.

Constituent assembly can cut GMA's term

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LAST TUESDAY, I LAMENTED THE CATHOLIC Bishops' call for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, whose validity the Supreme Court upheld in December 2004. In upholding its constitutionality, the Court ruled that foreign capital can venture into large-scale mining exploration, obviously after realizing there's not enough local capital for the kind of intensive capitalization large-scale mining entails. I argued that to allow our huge mineral wealth to remain buried under the earth while over half of our people remain mired in poverty is not charity but stupidity. I noted that the Philippines is the fifth richest country in the world in terms of mineral resources, with an estimated $1 trillion worth of minerals. Thus, with even just a fraction of our mineral wealth we can pay off our $55-billion foreign debt and still have enough to develop our economy.

* * *

I cited the case of Chile, whose economy has become the most progressive in Latin America, thanks largely to mining. In the decade leading up to 2000, when Chile's GDP grew by 7 percent yearly, making it one of the world's fastest-growing economies, mining accounted for 8.5 percent of its GDP. Minerals accounted for 47 percent of its exports in 2000, earning $7.3 billion, an increase from $5.9 billion in 1999, and employing 2 percent of the labor force. Five years later, the mining statistics for Chile were all up and Apec leaders, meeting in the capital of Santiago last year, were duly impressed by its progress.

* * *

I realize that the bishops mean well and only espouse the apprehensions of their communities about environmental degradation and being driven off their ancestral lands with the stepping up of mining activities. But they should also realize that many countries with far more stringent standards of environmental compliance than the Philippines have developed their mining industry and progressed, because they put up the necessary safeguards. One can think of Australia, Canada and Sweden, among other countries. Mining technology has progressed since the 1970s and there are now cleaner ways to extract minerals. Let's fight for the necessary safeguards, but let's also help rescue our people from perpetual bondage to poverty, not by isolating the country, which is what the leftists want, but by developing our God-given resources properly.

* * *

Sen. Edgardo Angara is correct: the burning question of whether President Macapagal-Arroyo should finish her term or cut it short can only be settled by convening a constituent assembly (Consa). He said this can be done immediately by both chambers of Congress, whereas a constitutional convention takes time since its delegates will have to be elected first. Angara stressed that if the members of Congress agree among themselves that GMA's term ends in 2007, as former President Fidel V. Ramos has advocated, then that decision takes effect upon the ratification of a new Charter through a plebiscite. The Palace has said that only in this manner can GMA agree to shorten her term and not under pressure from street rallies or calls from her critics.

* * *

I have said this before and I'll say it again: Those who want to see GMA's term reduced should work on their congressmen and senators to agree to convene a constituent assembly and push for a transitory provision cutting her term. After that, the anti-GMA folks should campaign for a yes vote in a plebiscite. This is the democratic way to resolve this divisive issue.

By the way, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was quoted as saying that Malacañang will push for the abolition of the Senate to pave the way for a unicameral Congress before next year's parliamentary elections. This statement won't win Senate support. Instead, the Palace should say what Speaker Jose de Venecia has repeatedly said: that it's pushing for the abolition of both chambers so that a single chamber will emerge.

The senators are understandably reluctant to write their own obituary. At the wake last week for Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes' mother, I told Sen. Richard Gordon that the senators seemed to be too preoccupied with preserving their office when conventional wisdom favors a unicameral system. He retorted, "But why not abolish the House? Why not 24 senators to form a parliament?"

But of course a parliamentary system being representative, the members of parliament have to represent specific districts, unlike the senators who are chosen at large and represent no specific constituency. I told Gordon he had nothing to fear since he's sure to be voted into parliament by the Zambaleños.

* * *

Amando Doronila is absolutely right in opining that criticisms about former Chief Justice Hilario Davide and former UP and now Kalayaan College president Jose Abueva's acceptance of various posts in the GMA administration stem from the perception that they are lending legitimacy to it. But so be it. I think these two distinguished gentlemen should be allowed to decide for themselves. If their careers should suffer, that's their lookout. But their decision should be respected.

The pettiness of opposition criticism is reaching unprecedented decibels. For instance, I ran into Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentebella at the Centrist Democrat International convention last week and sought his reaction to the hale of criticisms that First Gentleman Mike Arroyo received on account of of his high-profile presence at Manny Pacquiao's fight in Las Vegas. Puentebella pointed out that in the first place, it was Pacquiao who kept signaling to Arroyo to come up. Secondly, he said, when Pacquiao lost to Erik Morales in their first fight, Arroyo was there to share the boxer's sorrow. "What's wrong with sharing his moment of sweet victory, too?" asked the lawmaker.

Like the wrath of God

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HERE IS SOMETHING THAT COULD SERVE AS A historical footnote to the latest statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) on the current political situation issued a few days ago. As we prepare for the 20th anniversary of the Edsa I, which is three weeks away from now, I thought I should do a rewind and see parallels between the bishops' move now and the bishops' move 20 years ago.

I dug up the long feature story I wrote on the CBCP statement on the fraudulent 1986 snap elections shortly before that Edsa uprising. ("Like the Wrath of God," Feb. 21-27, 1986, Mr. & Ms. Special Edition, the daring and frisky weekly published by Eggie Apostol and edited by Letty J. Magsanoc, now INQUIRER editor in chief.) I remember we were camped out at the CBCP compound waiting with bated breath for what the bishops had to say. That damning CBCP statement helped create the groundswell that led to the toppling of the Marcos dictatorship a few days later.

Take a trip down memory lane. Excerpts:

Finally things snapped. Out of the silent halls of the Catholic Church the voice of the hierarchy crackled. The post-election statement of the CBCP came down like the wrath of God.

Valentine's Day 1986 would be long remembered as the day the bishops came out to condemn a political exercise. Lifting up their hemlines, they at last waded into muddy waters to cross the moat and lay siege on an impenetrable fortress.

The statement was, by far, the most scathing and the most pointed ever released by the CBCP. It outdid all previous pastoral letters, statements and exhortations and although nowhere in the statement was it mentioned who was guilty in the elections described by them as "unparalleled in the fraudulence of their conduct," there was no mistaking who the bishops meant. As former hostage Bishop Feredico Escaler S.J. (Zamboanga de Sur) exclaimed: "Marcos will be boiling mad!"

Scoring the systematic disenfranchisement of voters, the widespread and massive vote-buying, the deliberate tampering with the election returns, intimidation, harassment, terrorism and murder, the bishops took issue with "a government in possession of power." Signed by CBCP president Ricardo Cardinal Vidal ... the statement said: "If such a government does not of itself freely correct the evil it has inflicted on the people then it is our serious moral obligation as a people to ... (sorry, the bottom page didn't come out in the photocopy).

"We are morally certain that the people's real will for change has been manifested," said Bishop Teodoro Bacani.

Bishop Claver said: "The mandate for change is very clear. You make up your mind what that change means."

Although the bishops did not go into specifics on the action to be taken, they prescribed "active resistance of evil by peaceful means—in the manner of Christ." Their call would later see shape in Ms Corazon Aquino's seven-point program of civil disobedience laid out at the "Tagumpay ng Bayan" rally at the Luneta where she called for a boycott of the crony banks, media, corporations, and delay of payments to the government. The bishops' presence at the rally lent legitimacy to Ms Aquino's claim to victory in the elections.

They've come a long way, the monsignores. Since martial rule was imposed in 1972, there was nary a whimper of protest from the CBCP.... (It was the rank-and-file that fought and suffered with the masses.)

Before the February snap elections, the CBCP released an exhortation: "We Must Obey God Rather Than Men" calling on the faithful "not (to) passively surrender to the forces of evil and allow them to unilaterally determine the conduct and results of these elections." Cardinal Sin and the auxiliary bishops of Manila wrote one last December while Cardinal Vidal also issued one for Cebu. Several other bishops issued a letter for their respective dioceses.

Coming out with the post-election statement was not all that easy. As Bishop Antonio Fortich of Bacolod said: "It is 90 degrees Fahrenheit." Closeted at the CBCP complex in Intramuros, several times retreating into silence to pray and discern, the 66 bishops (of the more than 100, several of whom are retired) divided themselves into groups and presented their reports on the elections. Namfrel's Jose Concepcion, Vicente Jayme and Jose Feria also came to give reports.

Not to be outdone, Imelda Marcos did a Nicodemus and came in the dead of night to reportedly convince the bishops not to come out with the statement. Ms Aquino came too, two hours before the bishops' press conference to "assure Cardinal Vidal of my non-violent course of action."

Last Sunday, there were "staged" walkouts while the letter was being read. The government TV crew was not far behind to shoot. Labor Minister Blas Ople would later take issue with the bishops while Comelec chairman Victorino Savellano would stop going to church even as the Pope expressed confidence in the bishops' judgment. One thing was sure though—no one walked out of the CBCP conference contrary to what Marcos would later say at a press conference.

There were two drafts to choose from. The bishops voted for the stronger one...According to Escaler, four theologians helped in the drafting. They were Frs. Antonio Lambino and Pedro Achutegui, both Jesuits, Fr. Fausto Gomez of the Dominicans and Fr. Miranda of the SVDs.

While many bishops emerged from the conference beaming with satisfaction, there were a few who reportedly abstained from voting for the letter. "Don't ask me the names," said Escaler. "But there were three or four who kept putting up objections...But it was all done in an open spirit. We said, look, you're not telling us we're liars but that is how we perceive the situation—there is enough basis. We were practically unanimous."

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Prisoner's lament

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

JOSE ABUEVA IS A GOOD MAN. HE IS HONEST, conscientious and patriotic. I hold him in the highest personal affection and view him with inestimable admiration. He has shown me every personal courtesy; it is therefore a cause of considerable sadness that he takes exception to my saying that he "wanted parliamentary government and federalism so badly that he would settle for them in name, if not in fact, merely to achieve some sort of victory in the twilight of his life." I do not contest his summarizing his sterling record of public service. The entire country knows that. And I have never questioned the sincerity of his convictions.

It is entirely for these reasons that I said what I said, and will say it again, though it pains him to hear it, and it pains me to know that it causes him pain. He once saw clearly that as much as any thinking citizen is entitled to continue thinking of ways to improve the Constitution, when changes to it are proposed for the wrong reasons, then they should be opposed. He did so, in 1997. This time around, he has made himself a party to an effort that will neither result in federalism nor responsible parliamentary government. And surely, I am not alone in questioning why such a notable figure would lend his immense prestige and integrity to such an effort.

I am not fanatically against federalism, and indeed, I have written about it extensively in this space. To my mind, federalism deserves the widest possible discussion; it offers the prospect of a genuine transformation for the country. I am not even solidly opposed to parliamentary government, though I draw the line at unicameralism: even Abueva and his colleagues who drafted a proposed federal constitution retained a bicameral parliament. Indeed, had his original proposal survived the workings of the Consultative Commission he consented to head, I wouldn't have criticized him: he would have accomplished, at least partially, a lifetime's advocacy.

Personally, I am inclined to think that if federalism is to be adopted, we should retain the presidential system with a bicameral legislature; and that a purely parliamentary system—in particular, a unicameral one—seems less compatible with a federal structure. But those are just my views; the opinions of someone who has tried to keep up with the many conflicting sides of the debate, but who trusts that if a free, open, frank discussion on a national scale were held on the matter, it would all be sorted out for the best.

We did not have such a debate. Though the debates within Abueva's Commission were reportedly brisk, and consultations held at a whirlwind pace, the process resulted in recriminations within the Commission, and its report was met with active hostility by at least some members of the House of Representatives (never mind the skepticism on the part of the Senate). And much as it might amaze Abueva, I did pore over the draft Constitution prepared by the ConCom, noticing, as others who have studied the proposals did, that Article XX, Secs. 15-16 does provide for the transformation of the country to a Federal Republic. But was this a victory for Abueva's federal cause?

The party of the President, who appointed Abueva ConCom chair, apparently thinks not. For the Lakas-controlled House has replaced the ConCom's language with a series of provisions that calls for the "ultimate establishment of a federal system." As Benjamin Disraeli once said, "Finality is not the language of politics." And when legislators speak in terms of the ultimate, you can be sure they mean the indefinite.

The confused—and confusing—provisions regarding parliamentary government, both in the ConCom's entirely rewritten draft Constitution, and the more parsimoniously amended—but even more flagrantly self-serving—draft being considered by the House, also serve as an indictment of Abueva's participation in the entire process. A man used as a fig leaf to help disguise the naked and priapic condition of the Speaker and his gang (and the modestly lowered averted eyes of their hijacked camp-follower, the President) may protest and denounce as much as he likes when his intimate proximity to the lust for power is pointed out—in this case, not only of the appointing authority, but also that of the House. He may consider it patronizing, arrogant, unfair, even personal: the product of "prejudice and prejudgment" that is "consistent with his attitude toward the President and the coalition in power."

How can I help but feel prejudice against the indignity of Abueva being applauded in the Palace, even as the President who appointed him has never lifted even a pinky to pursue whatever tiny fruits were produced by her hand-picked Commission's labors? How can I not prejudge the coalition in power when one of its legislative foot soldiers, Rep. Constantino Jaraula, is incapable of explaining the inconsistencies of the House's own amendments, even as it is working to studiously ignore the Abueva Commission's handiwork? How can I not be hostile in my attitude to both, after reading their handiwork? Most of all, how can I not reach the sad conclusion that, despite the President and her party mocking his most cherished advocacies to his face, Abueva still strongly defends the entire process he's been trotted out to decorate? The pathos of such a man, insisting his tin-foil crown represents the laurels of genuine public service, is so heartbreaking it makes me mad. They chained him to their ambitions, and still he wags his tail.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph/blog

Six

YOUNG BLOOD

Simon Louis Errol E. Torres

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IT WAS FIVE O'CLOCK ON A BREEZY MONDAY MORNING. My head was still buried in my soft pillow and I was rubbing my left cheek. Somewhere between being awake and asleep, I yielded to the temptation to continue my slumber. I forced myself to dream.

I was 6 years old again. There was no need to hurry. No long lines and traffic to beat. My day's activities consisted of endless games, sloppy eating, running and smashing antique vases along the way. There's no annoying boss in sight, no cubicle to limit my movements, no covetous and nosy colleagues. No gossip to ruin the day. And best of all, no dreaded dead lines and stressful meetings and paperwork to be done.

The alarm clock suddenly rings. Is it the end of the world? The banging sound in my ear makes it seem so. I force myself to get up.

I'm no longer 6. My feet are bigger and I'm a wolf below my torso. I stare at myself in the mirror and all the tell-tale signs of staying up late so many nights are painted beneath my eyes. There are white strands of hair on my head, but luckily no wrinkles on my forehead yet.

I reach for a towel and take a bath by myself. Put my clothes on by myself and make breakfast by myself. I reach for the match box in the cupboard without hearing a high-pitched voice telling me not to do so. I do not need a chair to step on to get the bowls on the drawer. There's no hand to hold my spoon but my own.

I go outside and cross the street without an arm to cling on to. I do not stand in the middle of the crowd crying for my mom. I get on my way in a robotic fashion.

I have grown up. I have become an independent soul. Carebears and Bioman are icons of the past. Rambo slippers are now comforts of a distant child.

I cannot go back. I cannot run and hide behind my father's legs when a man with a thick beard arrives. I cannot run around the neighborhood sucking my thumb. I cannot squeeze myself inside a tree house when I am lonely and sad. I cannot poop in my pants or wherever. I cannot dive to the floor and wail when I don't get what I want.

I am a man now. And social norms tell me I must be gentle and not too loud. There are expectations I need to meet and responsibilities I must fulfill. I should act my age and be a model for the young. I should be mindful of the consequences of my actions and decisions. I have to face pain on my own.

And yet, at times, I miss the little guy. Worry-free. Oozing with energy. Spontaneous and free. I miss the chuckle and the infectious smile. I miss rolling like a madman on the spongy grass in the park. I miss hopping like a bunny or balancing on the street gutter. I miss the chocolate and ice cream. I miss the camaraderie and tender love when my brother carried me on his back.

I miss the pinches on my cheeks given by doting aunts and cousins. I miss the stinging sensation when the leather belt came in contact with the skin. I miss the bumps and bruises on the head, elbows and knees. I miss the innocence, the silliness and the pain.

But it's inevitable. You have to let go some time. Sometimes you have to play along not because it's the right thing to do but because it's the practice. I have to accept that childhood is now in my past and there's no going back there. Maybe I can return when I reach 80, but something tells me it will not be the same.

Childhood is a completely different world from my own. It's a world where everything seems to happen for the first time, a place of discovery and excitement, where cartoon characters are real and alive. Anxiety is an alien word there. It's a world I want to forever belong to but to which I cannot return.

The next morning, it rained. I got up, went outside, spread my arms and let the rain touch my face and run through my hands. It was bliss. I was 6 again.

Simon Louis Errol E. Torres, 23, finished BA Philosophy at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

Return to the wild

Tyrone Limon

IT HAS BEEN OVER A DECADE SINCE I LEFT THE FABLED courts of my youth. These are the very same courts on which I played almost every single day of my high school life. Though some of the physical structures have been upgraded, the place is still very much the facility I have grown accustomed to. Looking at the familiar goal posts, backboards and cement floor is enough to transport me back in time.

Memories come rushing back in black-and-white images: of skinny teenagers sprinting down the lanes to score on fastbreaks, of jumpshots, hookshots, reverse lay-ups, tap boards and high-soaring rebounds. Everybody's bursting with energy. Every facet of the game is done seemingly effortless. Sweaty and enthusiastic high school boys shout and laughing at the top of their lungs, even over the most mundane topics. No wonder these years are considered to be among the best. This is the time when, full of life and carefree, one can play hoops like there's no tomorrow.

But our pick-up game is about to begin. Here I am, 40 pounds heavier, with considerably deteriorating reflexes, playing full-court against players almost half my age. These aren't your average basketball-crazed youngsters; they are well-trained and conditioned varsity members. Instead of shrinking in trepidation, I take it as a challenge. Competitive juices are still flowing. No matter the age, gender and social status, a basketball game is still a basketball game. And a basketball player will always be a basketball player.

After a slow start, I have a good grasp of the situation. Walking several times up and down the court has helped me get into the groove. Though my mind is still as alert as it has always been, my body doesn't respond immediately. It's not as quick as I want it to be.

When the scrimmage is done, my team trails by only a few points. Surprisingly, all the jostling, banging and sprinting make me feel right at home. It's like being let loose after a long time in captivity. Though my body has taken its worst pounding in many years, my mind and most especially my soul are reinvigorated. Sure, I scored 10 points, got a few rebounds and issued a couple of assists, but the most important thing was being able to play again.

The exercise may have lasted just two hours, but it was all I needed to have a fresh perspective. Sometimes as soon as a person leaves school, he forgets that the simple things are what make one happiest. In my youth, it was on these courts where struggles were magnified, dreams were chased, characters were developed and history unraveled. And after more than a decade, these courts still did that for me.

Tyrone Limon, 29, is a basketball coach at the Ateneo, the University of Asia and the Pacific and Reedley School.

Save nation from Comelec

AFTER READING RINA JIMENEZ-David's Jan. 26 column, I decided to look deeper into the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. I was surprised to discover a clear and easy way to "dispose of the present Comelec."

Article IX, Subsection C. The Commission on Elections, Section 1(1) states:

"There shall be a Commission on Elections composed of a Chairman and six Commissioners .... However, a majority thereof, including the Chairman, shall be members of the Philippine Bar who have been engaged in the practice of law for at least ten years."

Bearing in mind the Jan. 13, 2004 decision of the Supreme Court nullifying the contract between the Comelec and the supplier of the automated counting machines—which was based on the "illegal and abusive acts of the Comelec"—coupled with the huge money involved (P2 billion) and the equipment's cost of storage, it is clear that the present Comelec is in a tough situation.

At least four of the present commissioners (maybe, all seven) are members of the Philippine Bar. So let's disbar them. On what grounds, it may be asked? For cause. Answer: They have so far failed to react to a Supreme Court order to recover the amount paid to the supplier and to reject the equipment supplied, in defiance of the laws of the land.

As "officers of the Court" the commissioners of the Comelec, especially those who are lawyers, must also answer to the Philippine Bar for their deeds. The Commission on Audit must provide the Philippine Bar with their post-audit report; and, of course, a copy of the Senate findings on the matter should be made available immediately to the president of the Philippine Bar.

What will such actions benefit? Check the Constitution! How can the Comelec commissioners remain in place if they are no longer members of the Bar?

Or has the Philippine Bar become so low it is unwilling to "save the day" for the Filipino nation? Let's see.

—DAHI NAHIN,
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World Bank's independent judiciaries: arrant nonsense

APPARENTLY, THE SUPREME Court's Ismael G. Khan commented on my Jan. 14 letter without consulting the keynote speech of then Justice (now Chief Justice) Artemio V. Panganiban before the symposium on judicial reforms sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in January 2005. The text of the speech was published in two installments by Today in its Jan. 11 and 12, 2005 issues.

In the speech, Panganiban states: "Aside from supporting APJR (Action Program for Judicial Reform) with grants and loans, the World Bank has posted in its website our blueprint for reform as a model ... the US Agency for International Development (US-AID), the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida), the Australian AID (AusAID) have also given us generous assistance.

"We are now at an advanced stage of negotiation for a Japanese government grant to build our Philippine Judicial Academy complex in Tagaytay .... Lately, the European Union has granted the Supreme Court some 3 million euros ... Early on, the Asian Development Bank has given us ADB TA 3693-PHI aimed at 'Strengthening the Independence and Defining the Accountability of the Judiciary.'"

In the light of the foregoing quotations, Khan's assertions in his Jan. 20 letter cannot stand. Khan states: "the Supreme Court never got any loans and grants directly from international foreign funding agencies. It was the Philippine government, through the Department of Finance, that secured these funds, which were in turn allocated for judicial projects."

It is obvious that Panganiban and Khan cannot be both correct. If the loans and grants were obtained by the Philippine government, through the Department of Finance, Panganiban would have acknowledged it. But he did not.

Khan states further: "the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the European Union are interested in independent and credible judiciaries in the whole world, not only in our country, because they believe that their primary mission of promoting economic development cannot be attained without independent and credible judiciaries."

This is arrant nonsense. The primary mission of the World Bank is not promoting economic development, but the opening and enlargement of the global market for the benefit of greed-driven, First World-based transnational corporations. The purpose of giving "generous" loans and grants to the judiciary is not to ensure its independence but to make it beholden to the givers.

—AMADO GAT INCIONG,
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Cultural imperialism visible in ban on eating of dog meat

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE news item on the practice of eating dog meat among Cordillerans. (PDI, 1/1/06)

I find it deplorable that so few in this country can defend the use of dog meat for food. It is a prime example of misguided shame over a local cultural and culinary practice.

Filipinos should resist this type of imperialism and take the cue from our neighboring countries: e.g., Vietnam, Korea and China, where this type of food is perfectly normal. In Seoul during the soccer world cup, Koreans invited foreigners to try the food at some 200 restaurants that were serving dog meat dishes.

Dog meat for food should be allowed in the Philippines, though it must be regulated by the same standards required of other meat sold for human consumption: whether chicken, pork or dog meat, it should be safe, hygienic and controlled.

But at present, the sale of dog meat is done outside the law or underground, raising the hazards such a practice poses to public health.

—PER ERIKSSON,
kaima@pldtdsl.net

Could Filipinos excel in games of teamwork?

WHILE I CELEBRATE WITH MY compatriots the victory of Pacquiao, what ails our sense of nationhood has become glaring: We are good at individual games, from boxing to bowling. But when it comes to games that need teamwork, we have yet to excel in them. And that's what we lack—teamwork.

Manny Pacquiao as an individual can only focus on his own individual goal. But can the Filipino team focus on only one goal and vision? Or are the goals and objectives as varied and personal as there are many members in the team?

—ARIEL TUMALA,
p_aytt@yahoo.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LETTERS

Spying usual even among allies

I REFER TO AMANDO DORONILA's column "US Embassy calls De Castro 'illiterate'." (PDI, 1/20/06)

Firstly, I never admired the former New York City Mayor Giuliani who stole the limelight out of 9/11 and into Time's "Person of the Year 2001."

I disagree with the American government on its negative impression of the Philippines' Vice President. There are worse political leaders than him if we look around the world.

Much has been said about the stolen classified US documents on the Philippines. There is such a thing as interstate relations through diplomatic missions, one of whose aims is to gather information for their respective countries. All nations, especially big powers, do this. RP-US relations are no exception particularly when both enjoy intimate relations. The closer one is politically, the more one is suspicious of each other.

Spying, covert operations, wiretapping, listening, bugging etc. are accepted norms of diplomacy even in diplomatic functions, summit talks, conferences and international organizations, as long as one is not caught with his pants down. They are as old as history.

It is not surprising that the foreign policy of monolithic United States is complicated mainly because international relations among the 191 UN members are constantly changing. When I was a graduate student in the United States 30 years ago, I once read in our prescribed text that the United States has no foreign policy.

—VALENTINE ANTHONY,
Puso ng Baguio, E2,
Session Road, Baguio City 2600

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Dictatorship in the making?

THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE Consultative Commission resembles the (Speaker Jose) De Venecia-(Rep.. Constantino) Jaraula draft in that both envision a very strong unitary and unicameral parliamentary government. It is hoped that this system of government would be free from gridlock: stalemates in Congress, and between Congress and Malacañang, would no longer happen.

However, a very strong unicameral, parliamentary government, without the necessary checks and balances provided by the federal structure, could easily become a dictatorial government. That would be worse than a gridlock in the system.

Prof. Rene Azurin of the UP Graduate School of Business Administration, and a ranking member of the ConCom, correctly warned that the very strong unicameral parliamentary system, without the checks and counterbalancing features, may degenerate into a dictatorial government. One of the country's respected columnists from Cebu, Bobit Avila, believes that political reforms must provide a balancing force against the very powerful government. According to him, true political reforms "would limit the powers of imperial Manila and give more of these powers to our local governments through the federal system."

Under the proposed system, corrupt politicians "will convert the budget into a huge pork barrel. Budget deliberations will just be concerned with the partitioning of funds among the parliamentary districts," according to Azurin. (PDI, 12/6/05)

Sen. Joker Arroyo confirmed these observations when he said, "What makes it worse is that it is a copycat, a plagiarism of the dictatorial Marcos 1973 Constitution." (Free Press, 12/31/05)

The Marcos dictatorial Constitution was the result of three Constituent Assembly dictatorial amendments in 1976, 1981 and 1984. Our people must now be wiser and wary—that another dictatorial constituent assembly amendment might be imposed on the Filipino people again.

In order to prevent the occurrence of another dictatorial regime, political science professors are recommending the following:

1. That the federal structure be incorporated in the strong unicameral parliamentary system as a safety valve or counter-balancing factor to the unrestrained powers of government. The efficiency of the federal structure is proven by nine out of the 10 best-governed countries of the world which have federal parliamentary governments. These countries are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, England and Switzerland.

2. That in response to the clamor and demands of our people, the 2007 election must be held as scheduled and it must include the election of delegates to a Constitutional Convention.

Many of us believe that the adoption of these two features will surely pave the way for a truly democratic and efficient government.

—JUNE B. JORDAN,
regional coordinator,
Citizen's Movement for a Federal
Philippines-Region 6,
36 D.B. Ledesma St.,
Jaro, Iloilo City

Pacman as 'fighting cock'

I'LL GO STRAIGHT TO THE point. Manny Pacquiao's recent match with Erik Morales caused me some depression. Sure, he won, and I certainly rejoiced over his victory. But seeing politicians go up the ring to congratulate him dismayed me!

There were even rumors that they posted large bets on that bout. Where did they get the money for the their bets and for their fare to Las Vegas?

To me, it looked as if they were using Manny as just another "*manok*" (fighting cock) for a special "cockfight."

I appeal to our politicians: Please let Pacquiao do his own thing. Support him as an individual person and not as a boxer. If he had lost the fight, would they still have gone up the ring and expressed their support for him?

—RICCI SANTIAGO,
signorelli@coolcare.com.sa

On FG's joining Pacquiao

THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG with Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo joining Manny Pacquiao on the ring after the latter's victory over Erik Morales.

The First Gentleman donated P1.6 million for our Southeast Asian Games athletes. His being with Pacquiao was another way of showing his support for sports.

What's wrong with the INQUIRER? Why would it say that Singson's and FG's act cheapened Pacquiao's victory? The editorial (PDI, 1/23/06) was certainly full of malicious and intriguing insinuations. It sowed the seeds of dirty politics.

—JORGE DIONEDA,
jorgen423@yahoo.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Thursday, February 2, 2006

Watch Pinoy Power in America's Hottest Dance Challenge!

Melody Lacayanga
Ryan Conferido
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE
SEE IT FIRST ON
ABC
Friday, 10pm

ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		Barclay's EPL		Goals		Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	S.O.S		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	American Idol 5		Dokyu	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Forbidden Love	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season II)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	Lost		24									
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinemax	Tough Luck			Guarding Tess			The Firm					Don't Talk To Strangers			Glass Trap			Against The Ropes (11:05PM)	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Unlakalive Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie McGuire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN												Sportscenter Asia							Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Who Wants To Marry My Dad 2		Change of Heart	ElimiDate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation, God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil-Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		The Trail To Hope Rose			Who's The Boss? II	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy		Murder Without Conviction			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Strong Medicine
HBO				A Thousand Acres			Love At First Bite (5:45 PM)				Alien Siege			Honey			Harry Potter & The Prisoner Of Azkaban		
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		Outrageous	Chill Factor	The Scene	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show With David Letterman		Smackdown				Jiu	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	The Late Show With David Letterman		The Late Show With David Letterman	Comedy Central Presents	South Park	The Man Show
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fixt	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		E! True Hollywood Story		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	Alert	MTV Cribs	MTV Hits		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc.		MTV Hits			Aeon Flux	MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collectors
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Tala 5	MYX News		Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Egypt Detectives: Mystery of The Pharaoh's Stone	Mosquito Hell		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell: Storm Front/First Impressions/Primal Fear/Mood Food	Storm Stories S2: Same Storm/Boscastle Flood
NBN		Value Vision		Value Vision		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron			All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Bagets 2				Dugo Sa Pangil Ng Buwan				Annie B.				Bangers				Burlog Sarado
Qtv		Bodyguard	Sister Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		News On Q	Women's Desk		MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Poker Hour
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Kasaganaan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports		WWC: Williams vs. Mirza			WWC: Winns Dois		NBA Game: Bulls @ Mavericks					NBA Game: Nuggets @ Jazz					Sportsdesk	IBF China Open Finals Women's Doubles	
Sports Plus	NBA Game Detroit @ New Jersey					Party Poker.com World Open 2005				SMB Poker Bar Tour 3	Slipstream	Road to Superbowl		World Game		Ray Ban Celebrity Poker Challenge			
Star Movies				Me, Myself and Irene (4:05 PM)				The Parent Trap (6:50 PM)				Cheaper By The Dozen	Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde						
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol 2006	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol 2006	8 Simple Rules	The Drew Carey Show Scrubs (Series 2)	Less Than Perfect	Man Vs. Beast		Friends	Scrubs
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Spirits	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Salt

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E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Pope picks first Filipino parish priest in Rome

FR. JESUS Maraño, who was appointed priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church in the Diocese of Rome, is reunited with relatives and friends in his hometown in Daraga, Albay.
NINO JESUS ORBE

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Daraga, Albay

I DREAMED [OF HAVING] A BIG FAMILY OF MY own, but I ended up having a parish that is itself a big family," confesses Fr. Jesus Maraño, a native of Barangay Anislag in Daraga town, Albay.

Father Jess, as he is more popularly known, was appointed priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church in the Diocese of Rome by Pope Benedict XVI on Nov. 6, 2005. He said it was natural that after 10 or more years of serving as a parochial vicar in different parishes, he knew he would be a parish priest.

He has stayed for almost 21 years in the Holy See since he began higher studies and eventually becoming a parochial vicar for 13 years in seven different parishes in Rome.

Among these are the San Vigilio Parish Church, Parish of the Resurrection, Pablo Martinez Parish Church, and other churches in the western and eastern parts of Rome.

But being anointed by the Pope as the first Filipino and Asian parish priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church still surprises him up to now.

This is the first time, Father Jess says, that the Vatican appointed a non-Italian parish priest in the diocese. What is more astounding is his being a Filipino.

Hometown

In the third week of January, two months after his appointment, Father Jess returned to his parents' ancestral house in Daraga for a two-week vacation.

It was a happy reunion with his family, friends, church colleagues, former high school and college mentors, and some benefactors, he claims. These people have given him undying support and love since he chose to become a priest.

"My heart and my passion to serve are always here, for this is where my calling and my commitment to serve God and His people started," Father Jess claims.

He adds that his experiences in living with and helping the sick and dying, as well as the indigent and underprivileged, started here.

It was not, however, the first time that Father Jess visited and celebrated Masses in his native town. "I always want to come home here in Albay," he says.

Father Jess says he receives the same warm and hospitable welcome in both Rome and Daraga.

God's grace

He says he is serving 5,000 Italians in his parish and considers this "a great responsibility, but I don't find it hard to find ways to serve my *kababayan*," he says.

In 2000, he established a scholarship foundation to support indigent youths of Daraga. At present, 61 elementary, high school and college students benefit from the program. He says it had been his long-time dream to come up with a support program like this for the youth.

"I know how it feels to belong to a very poor family—education is very hard to sustain. Right now, I'm very lucky to be in a position to help them. There are so many benefactors out there that continue to support me in this very noble endeavor," he discloses.

Michael Macasinag, who is now in third year college, says he's very thankful that since high school, he has been a beneficiary of the foundation.

Liliosa Morada shares the happiness that the foundation bestows on her son, who is now a seminarian and who wants to follow in the footsteps of Father Jess.

Second child

Born on Dec. 25, 1964, Father Jess is the second of seven siblings. His father was a carpenter and his mother, a dressmaker.

He confides that every time he comes back home, he can't help but cry when he reminisces the sacrifices of his family in order to survive and for his siblings to have an education.

But God's grace comes in a different way. According to him, poverty was not really a burden to his dream of finishing his studies and helping his family. Just like his scholars, he, too, was very lucky to have benefactors and patrons that financially supported him.

Father Jess finished his elementary and high school education in his hometown.

His first career choice was to be an engineer, but due to financial constraints, he had to take Education, major in English, and got a scholarship grant from the Bicol University.

He maintained his scholarship even as he worked part-time on campus, including being a janitor. Occasionally, he helped his father in carpentry projects.

Father Jess says he never felt ashamed of his work since it taught him a lot to become more humble and develop his love for hard work.

Calling

But not known to many, including his parents and college sweetheart, he frequently visited the nearby provincial hospital. This became routinary during his first two years in college. If he had extra money, he would buy food or he would give half of his earnings to the sick.

"I kept it a secret that time because I didn't want people close to me to wonder or mock me. But it gave me a different kind of inspiration to study and work hard without knowing that little by little it had awakened the calling for me to serve Him in a very different way," he says.

"Ironically, I really wanted to have a big family if ever I decided to marry my girlfriend. I wanted many children as much as possible. I knew it will bring a lot of joy."

Surprising everyone, he told his family, close friends, teachers—and yes, his girlfriend, one day that the time had come for him to enter the seminary.

Loneliness engulfed his family, especially his father. "Out of anger, my late father wanted to punch me, while my mother was saddened as becoming a priest was more expensive than taking up a particular course in a college," Father Jess recalls.

Duties

In 1984, against everybody's will, he entered the minor seminary. Fortunately, he says, his family did not spend any single centavo.

His Grade 2 teacher, Selfa Lorica, says that she saw in her young pupil that he would someday become a priest. Aside from being humble, he was very friendly, courteous and diligent, she says.

"It's really God's will that many patrons sponsored my studies to become a priest, including the opportunity to study in Rome in 1985," Father Jess says.

While in Italy and since he was ordained a priest in 1992 at the Vatican, Father Jess has continued to support his family with the help of benefactors there. He became so busy in his priestly duties that he could not find time to talk to his family or come back home even if he wanted to.

When his father died in 2000, coinciding with the World Youth Day celebration at the Vatican, Father Jess decided to come home at least twice a year.

"I felt so sad because that same year was the first time that my father made an overseas call and persuaded me to come home for they really missed me. I told him that I was very busy for the jubilee year celebration. I didn't know that it would be the last that I would hear his voice as he died after two months in an accident," he recounts.

His mother died in 2002.

Aside from his scholarship foundation, all of his siblings now lead modest lives and mutual support remains very strong.

As a parish priest, he says, he plans to continue propagating the importance of the foundation of a family and educating the youth.

Mindoro youths learn windsurfing

By Marciano T. Virola Jr.
Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro

FOR THE UNINITIATED, windsurfing may seem a daunting sport.

But according to Melo Garcia, a member of the windsurfing national team player and native of Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, the sport is really all about sailing and is not difficult to learn.

"In the 1980s, windsurfing was difficult to learn. Equipment then were made of carbon. Now they are made of aluminum. With simple equipment, even children can learn the basics in 60 minutes. Or even someone as old as 70 can do so," he adds.

Garcia, 40, knows what he's talking about. He owns Sandbar Resort and the whole Boquete Island in Puerto Galera where the leisure place is located.

"This is a perfect place for windsurfing. The wind is strong all year long, especially from November to April, and the water is warm. It is also safe because it is a cove," he boasts.

Grandfather

The sportsman's grandfather came to Puerto Galera from Batangas in the 1930s. He was a boat captain transporting copra and other products, dropping anchorage near Boquete. He acquired land parcels on the island and eventually owned all 78 hectares of it.

Boquete is sandwiched by the China Sea in the west and the Pacific Ocean in the east. "From here, you can watch the sunrise facing one beach and the sunset facing the opposite beach," Melo says.

Foreigners started to come in 1978, when hotels were only available downtown. And since Garcia's house is big and has many rooms, foreigners, mostly Germans, French and other Europeans, suggested renting the house.

WINDSURFING enthusiast Melo Garcia
MARCIANO VIROLA JR.

From then on, the family's resort business started.

Speed

Athletically inclined, Garcia started playing tennis at the age of 12. His main sport, however, is windsurfing.

In 1983, when he was 16, he was introduced to the sport by a French instructor, who told him that the island was ideal for windsurfing because of good wind, safe sea and warm water year-round.

Garcia says the enjoyment of windsurfing comes from speed. The world speed record is 50 miles per hour.

"When I am sailing, I tend to forget everything else. It is very quiet since no motor is used. I always feel like shouting at the top of my lungs," he says animatedly.

Jobs

Despite his love for the sport, Garcia had to stop windsurfing for a while to study in Manila. He took up a business course at the Adamson University.

He took his first job at a shipyard in Batangas, after meeting his employer in a tennis game at—where else?—in their resort in Boquete.

"I was a sales engineer. My job was to convince ship owners to let us repair their boats. I was also the test-pilot for the boats made before these were returned to the owners," Melo recalls.

He worked for six years until 2000 when his father told him to come back and manage the island. His father died last year.

He eventually developed the resort.

Training youths

Garica wants to revive windsurfing in Puerto Galera, which peaked in the '80s and '90s.

He believes that former athletes of windsurfing and other sports have not been getting the recognition they deserve.

Garcia's enthusiasm about windsurfing is largely due to the chance it offers to local youths to excel in sports. Under his windsurfing scholarship program, children, aged 10 or 11 years old and mostly come from fishing families, are trained in the sport for free.

"I have also started training children for dinghy sailing, which uses a small sailboat with two crewmen," Garcia says.

With a little support, he may yet succeed in honing the skills of Mindoro's young athletes.

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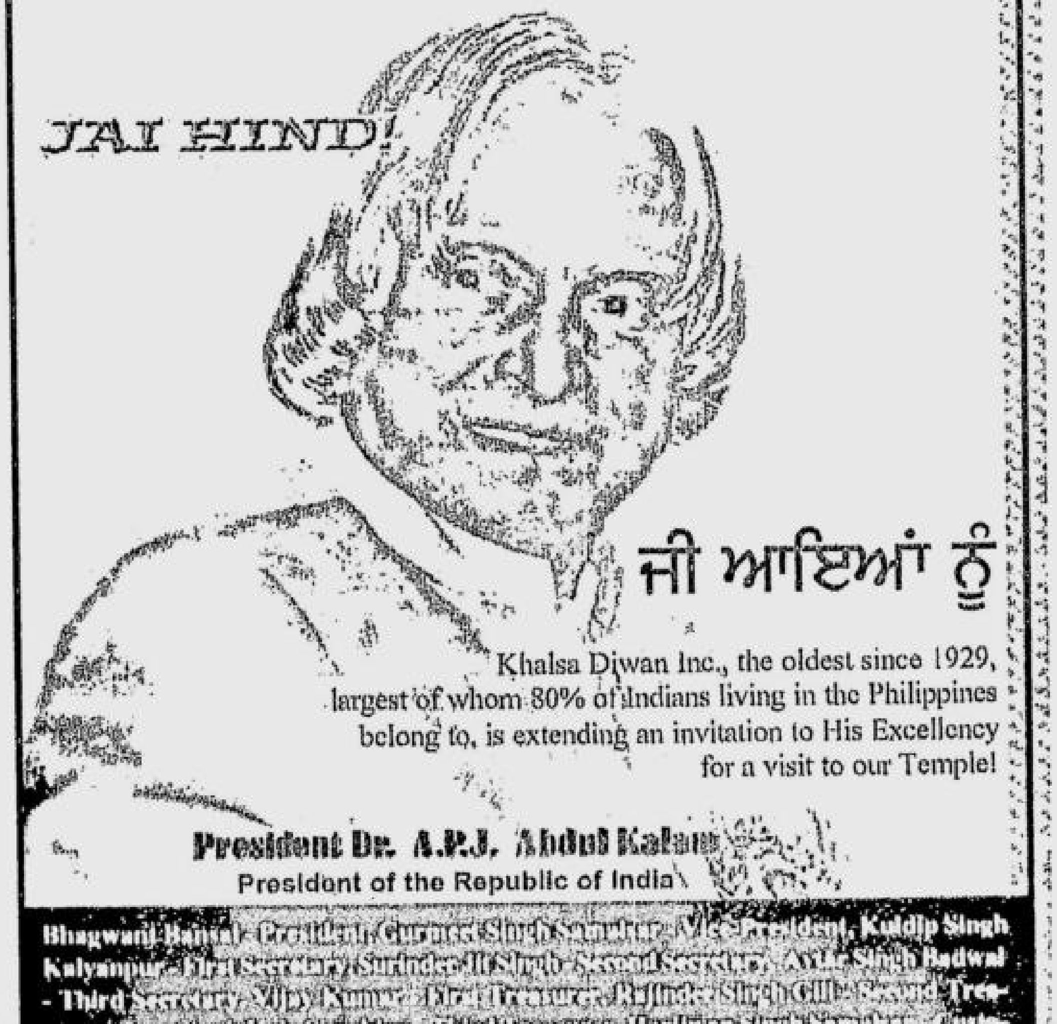

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Tarlac clashes death toll rises to 11

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—THE DEATH TOLL IN the series of clashes between communist rebels and government soldiers in Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac, has risen to 11, a military official said on Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, head of the military's Northern Luzon Command, said three more New People's Army rebels and a soldier, identified as Army Corporal Gerry Galas, were added to the seven fatalities reported on Tuesday.

Tolentino said the bodies of eight slain rebels, one of them a woman, have yet to be claimed from the Funeraria Corpus in Sta. Ignacia as of 3 p.m. Wednesday.

He said he was certain that more rebels were killed in the clashes, citing body parts found strewn in the clash sites.

"*Lasog-lasog sila* (They have been dismembered)," Tolentino said.

He said there were no civilians among the recovered bodies because all had guns beside them when found after the gunfight and air strikes in the villages of Sta. Inez West, Labney, Lawacamulag, David and Linglinggay.

"The militants were saying they (the fatalities) were farmers. But why was no one claiming their bodies?" Tolentino said.

Lt. Col. Gregory Cayetano, commander of the Army's 71st Infantry Battalion that engaged the rebels, said 12 M-16 rifles and a grenade launcher were recovered from the clash sites.

But the human rights advocate group Karapatan contradicted the military's reports, saying two of the 10 people killed were farmers living in San Jose town.

Emil Paragas, Tarlac coordinator of Karapatan, identified them as Allan Ibasan, 18, and Dante Salgado, 17.

Paragas said Ibasan's brother, Glenn, told their team that soldiers took Ibasan and Salgado while they were cutting bamboo in Barangay Villa Aglipay in San Jose before the encounter erupted.

The bodies of Ibasan and Salgado were claimed by their relatives on Wednesday.

Paragas said accounts gathered by Karapatan in the villages indicated that more civilians were killed or hurt in what was so far described as the military's biggest operation in Tarlac, one of the known strongholds of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Central Luzon.

The NPA's Nelson Mesina Command said its field commanders were still assessing the death toll on their side.

The clashes highlight the continuing anti-insurgency operations of the government that a Left wing organization in Southern Tagalog said led to human rights violations similar to those committed during martial law.

"The military death squad is on the loose again," said Leng Jucutan, chair of Karapatan-Quezon chapter.

On Wednesday evening, Roberto de la Cruz, Anakpawis coordinator in Lucena, was shot dead inside his canteen by a motorcycle-riding assailant.

Police said two unidentified suspects aboard a motorcycle and wearing helmets stopped in front of the roadside eatery owned by the victim.

One of the riders proceeded to the canteen and shot the victim several times, after which he casually walked away and sped off aboard the motorcycle.

Jucutan said the pattern of the killing was the same as that of the murder of Ronnie Almaote, a Bayan Muna coordinator, who was also killed by two motorcycle riders last year. *With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Cordillera cops are tops

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—The Cordillera police was declared the country's best regional police office in 2005. Chief Supt. Leonardo Dionisio, Cordillera police director, received the award from President Macapagal-Arroyo during the Philippine National Police's 15th anniversary celebration in Camp Crame on Monday. The Benguet police office, led by Senior Supt. Villamor Bumanglag, was named best provincial police office in the country. The awardees were chosen during the joint inspection and audit conducted by the National Police Commission, PNP Internal Affairs Service and the Civil Service Commission in August and September last year.

PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

3 killed in ambush

CANDON CITY—Three men were killed when their group was ambushed by armed men in Burgos, Ilocos Sur, on Monday. Police said the fatalities—Saturnino Gayyed, 40; Ryan Santiago, 18; and Profanio Dalit, 49—and their five companions came from a wake in nearby Lidlidda town and were crossing a river in Barangay Bessang when they were shot at past 12 a.m. on Monday. In an interview over a local radio station, Insp. Fredelito Calibuso, Burgos police chief, said Gayyed and Dalit died instantly while Santiago died in a clinic in Santa Maria town.

Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Soldier slain in N. Cotabato

KIDAPAWAN CITY—Suspected communist rebels shot dead a soldier in Makilala, North Cotabato on Monday, police said Tuesday. Makilala police chief Senior Insp. Leo Ajero identified the victim as Sgt. Ernie Gallardo, 40, of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion. Ajero said Gallardo was standing in front of a variety store in Barangay Old Bulatukan when two pistol-wielding suspects attacked him. He died from multiple gunshot wounds in the head. In Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, suspected communist rebels shot dead two B'laan natives on Sunday before fleeing with the victims' horses, according to reports reaching the Central Mindanao police command.

Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Rebels hold 3 persons

DAVAO CITY—New People's Army (NPA) rebels under Leonardo Pitao, alias Commander Parago, abducted three people in Barangay Mapula in Paquibato District here, the military said Monday. The victims were in a vehicle when forced at gunpoint by the rebels to go with them on Jan. 25, according to Col. Rolando Jose Bautista, commander of the Army's 73rd Infantry Battalion. With the recent abduction, Bautista said it appeared that Parago has recovered from his illness and has started to lead the local Pulang Bagani command again.

Judy Quiros, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Misuari hospitalized

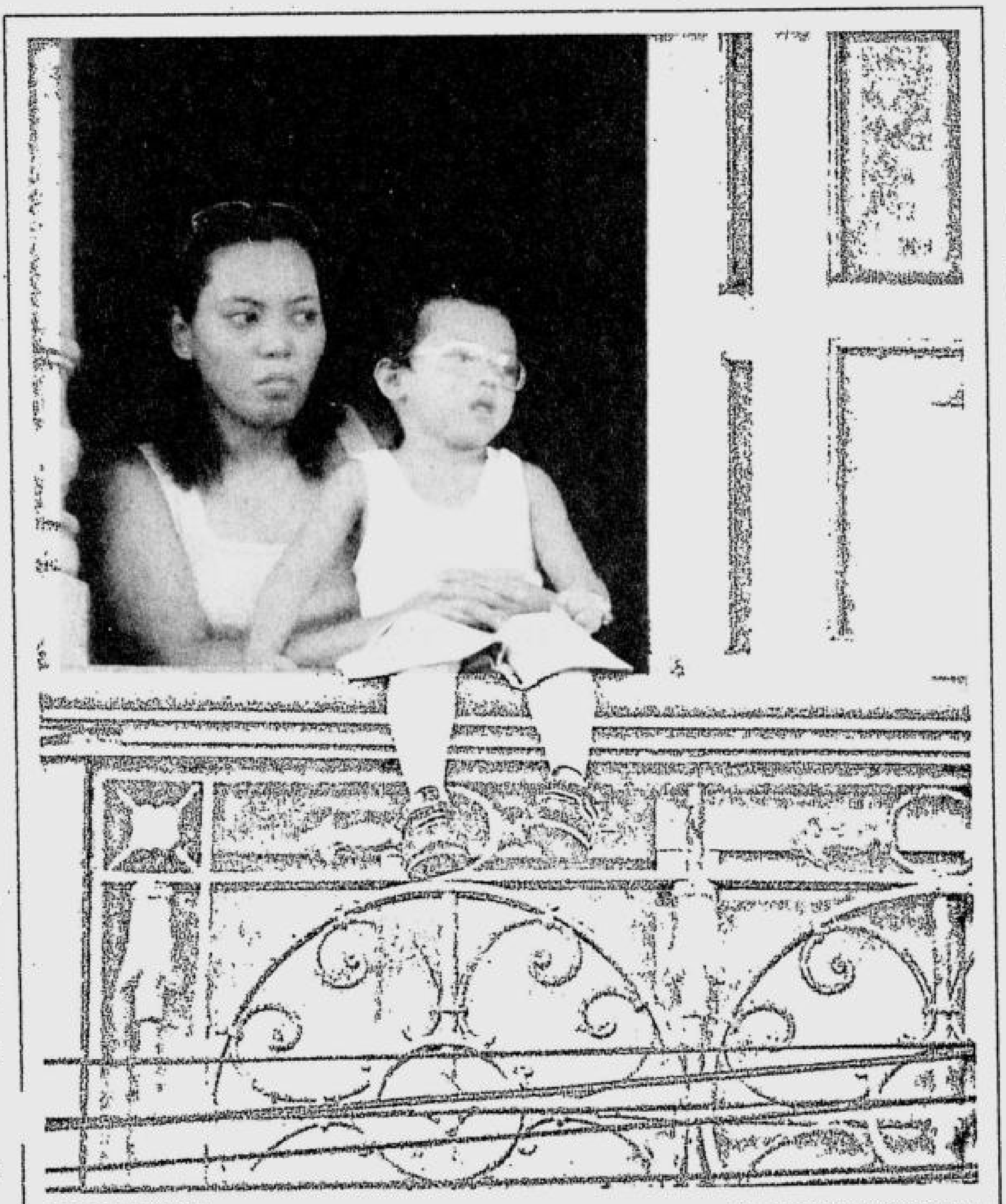
JOLO, Sulu—Moro leader Nur Misuari on Sunday said he was admitted at the St. Luke's Hospital for abdominal pains and erratic blood pressure. Earlier, a court granted Misuari a 10-day furlough after the Moro leader, who was charged with the 2001 uprising here and in Zamboanga City that killed about 100 people, complained he was becoming ill. Reached by phone, Misuari said he could not discuss his condition yet because he was still to be checked up. "Tell our people that Insha Allah (with Allah's will), I am in good health," he said. Misuari said he "could not give further statement because I am not allowed to do so." Misuari's followers in Sulu believe the medical checkup was the final stage for their leader's exile. One of them, a trusted Misuari lieutenant, said on condition of anonymity that the Moro leader would be exiled to Qatar. Moro groups, including the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have been pressing the government to allow the Moro leader to leave the country.

Ed General, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Pneumonia alert

COTABATO CITY—Health authorities in North Cotabato have warned residents, especially those living in far-flung areas, to take precautionary steps to prevent pneumonia, the leading cause of death in the province in 2005, with 132 deaths caused by the disease. "This is alarming," said Felina Hernandez, Cotabato provincial hospital chief nurse. She said residents should volunteer to come to the health centers for preventive measures. Most of the pneumonia cases last year were recorded in Arakan, Magpet, Antipas and President Roxas, North Cotabato's far-flung towns. She said most of the patients sought treatment only after they were already in serious condition.

Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau



SPECTATORS ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU
A woman and her child watch the Dinagyang Festival in downtown Iloilo City in the comfort of their home.

Legazpi mayor appeals Comelec ruling

LEGAZPI CITY MAYOR NOEL E. Rosal has appealed the decision of the Second Division of the Commission on Elections declaring mayoral rival Michael Victor Imperial as winner by about 2,000 votes during the May 2004 elections.

Rosal questioned the Comelec's decision to invalidate 14,067 votes from his original votes of 44,277 votes that resulted in 30,210 votes for Rosal and 32,085 votes for Imperial.

The Comelec's Second Division is composed of Commissioners Florentino A. Tuason Jr. and Mehol Sadain.

Rosal said he wondered how, all of a sudden, 14,067 of his votes were invalidated. He claimed there was no technical examination made on the questioned ballots to determine whether these were really spurious.

Instead, he said, what was done was a summary procedure.

"The Comelec apparently failed to consider the 110 affidavits of teachers certifying that most of the ballots recounted no longer bore their original signatures," Rosal added.

He said it would be hard to manipulate election returns as they bore the signatures of the representatives of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting and the National Movement for Free Elections, party representatives and teachers as board chairs.

Rosal filed a motion for reconsideration while Imperial filed a writ of execution of Comelec's decision.

Rosal also said during the recount, he got 39,601 votes while Imperial had 39,058 votes.

The Legazpi Board of Canvassers declared Rosal winner with 44,277 votes against Imperial's 33,275 votes. *Gina Rodriguez, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

AFP starts implementing new honor code for PMA

FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO City—Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga on Monday implemented the comprehensive 10-year reform plan that would guide the Philippine Military Academy to changes once advanced by military revolutionaries.

Retired Navy Capt. Proceso Maligalig, spokesperson of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), said he recognized in the "Philippine Military Academy Road Map to 2015" some of the policy changes that RAM pushed when it went underground after the Edsa Revolution in 1986.

"The reform agenda PMA wants [to implement] is systems-oriented. There's now a trend to reinvigorate the honor system maybe because of [retired officials like Maj. Gen. Carlos] Garcia... If an insane man gets in because they assume he is intelligent anyway, four years of a military science course won't change him," Maligalig said.

Senga said the road map proves that the military is ready for progressive change unlike the reforms being preached through "innuendos" by military adventurists.

"Let us take this opportunity to work together for this common goal... and not be distracted by unproductive innuendos that say nothing but sow discourse and confusion," Senga said.

Architect

The road map was designed by Lt. Gen. Cristolito Balaoing, outgoing PMA superintendent and the same man who drew up the AFP modernization plan.

Balaoing told the INQUIRER earlier that fixing PMA is a way to plug a vacuum in fresh career officers as the AFP retires most of its generals.

Inspired by reforms made at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, Balaoing said the road map reshapes the curriculum so that even simple subjects like English are designed to develop a professional military career for cadets.

At its most basic, the road map defines the PMA's reason for existence and its political anchor, he said.

It introduces a modern honor code, which binds all PMA graduates to a uniform moral system.

The document also specifies that the government needs future military officers to simultaneously be the country's administrative managers, statisticians, teachers, engineers, role models and combatants.

Balaoing submitted the road map to Senga in front of PMA cadets, after he relinquished his post to Brig. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig, a member of PMA "Magilas" Class of 1976.

Leopoldo, the younger brother of the RAM spokesperson, became the academy's 51st superintendent after serving as its 51st commandant of cadets under Balaoing's term.

Proceso Maligalig, a member of PMA Class 1969, said the road map is the most inventive course taken by the academy. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Report says it was whale, not dugong

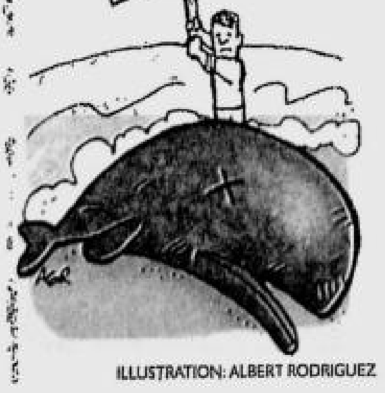


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

LEGAZPI CITY—THE CARCASS found on the shore of a village in a controversial mining site in Albay belonged to a sperm whale, not a dugong (sea cow), as thought earlier, officials said on Tuesday.

Rey Juan, Bicol regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), quoted two other officials as saying the carcass, earlier thought to be that of a dugong, was actually that of a sperm whale.

A report by the MGB regional office said the carcass was brought to the municipal cemetery to be buried since it was emitting foul odor.

"Foul odor also emanated from the burial site (which then had to be deodorized) with chlorine and Lysol," the report added.

A press statement from Lafayette Philippines Inc. said that a picture of the whale's carcass was attached to the MGB report and showed a fin on its top side, indicating it was not a dugong. The whale was pregnant.

It said that, according to the MGB report, the whale most likely died from its wounds.

Wounds

It (whale) "bore contusions, lacerations and wounds all over its body."

According to Lafayette, "the (MGB) report did not say if the wounds were man-inflicted or not. The report in effect rejected allegations by antimining activists blaming Lafayette's mining activities for the whale's death. It was also the activists who claimed it was a dugong."

In a statement, Lafayette said its mining operations in Rapu-Rapu, Albay was highly unlikely to be the cause of the whale's death since smaller fishes would have died, too, before the whale did if the waters of Rapu Rapu were indeed contaminated.

In an earlier interview, Jose Belando, 56, the fisherman who first saw the carcass, said "I saw it (dugong) yesterday morning (Jan. 26) in the shore near a tree in my house, with its stomach's side up."

"At first I did not notice it since I thought that it was just an ordinary fish and I would not benefit from it," he said.

His neighbors milled around the big bloodied carcass and thought at first that it was a dolphin.

He could not tell the cause of its death. "I just saw it there. I could not tell how it died."

The MGB report was prepared by Christian Oropesa, senior science research specialist, and engineer Roy Collamar.

The mining firm said official findings released only last week showed that the island's waters sampled on Jan. 6 and 19 were well within the government's strict cyanide standards. *Joanna P. Los Baños, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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MEGALOTTO 6/45
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Protest settles fight for top cops title

By DJ Yap and Jocelyn R. Uy

IT WAS THE QUEZON CITY POlice District (QCPD) against Manila's Finest. And the winner is ... the Southern Police District (SPD).

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. yesterday protested the selection of the Manila Police District (MPD) as the top Metro Manila police force of 2005, saying the honor should go to his men.

Belmonte said that based on the consolidated performance evaluated ratings of Metro Manila's five police districts, the QCPD garnered the most points, with a total score of 2,960.36 compared to the MPD's 2,858.77, from the fourth quarter of 2004 to the third quarter of 2005.

In fact, Belmonte said, the SPD's score was higher than the MPD, with 2,958.64 points. The ranking should therefore be: QCPD, first; SPD, second; MPD, third; Northern Police District, fourth; and fifth, Eastern Police District, he added.

Sought for comment, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Vidal Querol told the INQUIRER, "The best police district is the MPD. The second best is SPD."

However, since the MPD was already honored as the Best Police District for 2005 during the 15th PNP anniversary celebration last Monday, the National Capital Region Police District of the Year award will go to the second placer—the SPD, he added.

Supt. Agrimero Cruz Jr., NCRPO public information office head and member of the awards committee, explained that the selection of the winner was not entirely based on the consolidated performance evaluated ratings earned by police districts.

"It is just 30 percent of the total criteria for the award," Cruz clarified although he did not say what the other criteria were. The award will be handed out today at the NCRPO headquarters in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

'Love camp' to host special kids in QC

By DJ Yap

THIS FEBRUARY, A SPECIAL kind of love will flow at Camp Pag-ibig in Quezon City, as it celebrates 30 years of giving cheer and hope to differently abled children.

From Feb. 18-19, hundreds of special children from all over Metro Manila and neighboring provinces will converge at the Balara Filter Plant in Diliman, to participate in activities especially prepared for them.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. will be the camp host and honorary chair, a role he has assumed since 2001, organizers said.

"Camp Pag-ibig is designed to provide children with disabilities opportunities to enhance their socialization skill, paving the way for full integration and participation in the community," they added.

The annual camping activity was started in 1976 by the Philippine Association for the Retarded Inc. as the highlight of the observance of National Retarded Children Week, as provided for in Presidential Proclamation No. 1385.

Mascots and clowns

Like any camp, tents will be put up, with clowns and mascots performing for the children during a fun-filled program. A parents' forum will also be held.

The activities were planned and designed to make the children remember the festivity for years to come, according to camp director Jorge Banal Sr., Senate Jaycees president and a former Quezon City councilor.

BELMONTE

This year's camp will also be bigger, with participants coming from special schools in Regions 3 and 4 joining in, as stated in a Department of Education (DepEd) memorandum, said co-camp director Erlinda Lolarga.

An estimated 2,500 campers are expected to attend, organizers said.

Highlighting this year's Camp Pag-ibig is the blessing and unveiling of a marker describing the camp's history for the past 30 years, followed by a thanksgiving Mass.

Patrons and sponsors are encouraged to chip in to ensure that the 30th anniversary of the camp will be a success, Banal said.

Camp Pag-ibig organizers and sponsors include the Quezon City government, QC Capitol Jaycees, DepEd, Manila Water Co., Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Montalban, Capas dumps await Metro trash—MMDA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday urged the public to segregate their garbage, saying this will prove helpful if the closure of two controlled waste dumps pushes through on Feb. 16.

In case the two dumps close, Rolando Paguinto, acting chief of the MMDA's Solid Waste Management Office (SWMO), said the MMDA, overall provider of disposal facilities for the garbage generated by the metropolis, may divert the trash to the 14-hectare Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility in Rodriguez, Rizal, and the Clark Development Corporation in Capas, Tarlac. "Of course, that's only a short-term solution," he added.

According to Paguinto, segregation reduces the volume of trash generated by a household by 30 percent.

"The life span of the disposal facility is lengthened because of the reduction in waste generated everyday," Paguinto told the INQUIRER.

"When it comes to problems about garbage, we need the help of the people. In the event we experience a crisis, if they help us by segregating and bringing out trash only on the day of the collection, at least that lessens the effects of a garbage problem," he said. The Navotas and Payatas (Quezon City) dumps are scheduled to close on Feb. 16, in compliance with provisions of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Waste Management Act, which orders the closure of all open and controlled dumps.

Of the 7,000 tons of garbage generated by Metro Manila daily, Paguinto said 1,200 tons is taken to Navotas and 1,500 tons to Payatas. On the other hand, local governments, through their waste segregation and recovery programs, process 1,000 tons of trash.

Right now, Montalban is the biggest recipient of Metro Manila's trash, receiving 1,800 tons of garbage from 10 of Metro Manila's 17 cities and municipalities. Capas, on the other hand, processes 500 tons of trash daily.

METROBRIEFS

No toll hike, but ...

ARAY KO I FARE HIKE NANAMAN ?!

THE PHILIPPINE National Construction Corp. (PNCC) said it will not raise toll rates even after the government raised the value-added tax (VAT)from 10 percent to 12 percent beginning yesterday. "VAT is not included in toll rates for now," said PNCC chair Arthur Aguilar in an interview. But airline and shipping firms have already raised their fares, while public land transport groups said they will ask the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for another fare increase if the price of diesel hits P34 to P35 per liter. Vigor Mendoza, the transport groups' lawyer, said they will monitor fuel prices in the coming weeks. Diesel prices went up by 50 and 60 centavos a liter following the implementation of the 12 percent VAT. Should diesel prices go up to P35 per liter, the transport groups will push for a P1 to P1.50 fare hike for the first four kilometers, Mendoza said.

Clarissa S. Batino

Lost and found

THANKS to the tracker system installed in her cellular phone, the 16-year-old granddaughter of the late House Speaker Ramon Mitra recovered the phone which she lost to a robber last month. The victim said the suspect, Magellan Boaloy, took her cell phone (a Nokia 6630) and wallet while she was eating in a restaurant on President's Avenue in BF Homes, Parañaque on Jan. 17. Boaloy, however, made several calls using the victim's phone, which enabled the telecommunications service provider to track down his whereabouts via a tracking system, city police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles said. The suspect was eventually arrested nine days later while the cell phone was found about to be sold at a shopping mall in Barangay San Antonio.

Jocelyn R. Uy

Wrong move for cops

MERONG IDENTITY CRISIS !

TWO POLICEMEN and their companion were arrested the other night for allegedly robbing and extorting money from two men in Pasig City. SPO1 Ramon Hairul, 45, and PO3 Alex Recio, 38, both of the Pasig City Police Community Precinct 4, were arrested with Rodel Jacla, 30, during an entrapment operation the other night. Recio and Jacla allegedly approached Roland Cabrera, 36, and Richard Espejo, 23, residents of Taguig City, near the Mutya Ng Pasig Public Market at about 12:30 a.m. Tuesday, Pasig City Police Investigation chief Supt. Gerry Galvan said in a report. Recio and Jacla took the victims' cell phones, P3,500 in cash and Cabrera's gold necklace. The suspects told Cabrera he could claim his necklace at the Police Market Detachment for P1,000. When Cabrera showed up at the detachment, Hairul gave him back the necklace after he was given P1,000. Recio and Jacla were arrested during follow-up operations, Galvan said.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

St. Ezekiel honored

DEVOTEES are expected to flock to Recoletos Chapel in Antipolo until Feb. 9 as they recall the arrival of St. Ezekiel Moreno in the Philippines. A series of Masses for the sick will be celebrated in the saint's honor at 9 a.m. for nine consecutive days. Healer-priest Fr. Ferdinand T. Hernando, OAR, rector of St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos, Antipolo, said that "it is but fitting that we celebrate Masses for the sick as a way of thanking the saint for his dedication and ministry to us Filipinos, especially the poor and the sick." According to historical records, the patron saint for cancer patients arrived in the country on Feb. 10, 1870 and served for 15 years until May 1885 when he was recalled by his superiors in Spain. The Recoletos-Antipolo chapel is located in Nuestra Señora de la Paz Subd., Sumulong Highway, Antipolo. For more details, contact Sr. Miriam Ruiz, SARF, of St. Ezekiel Moreno Healing Ministry at 0927-3216193.

Manila Water
MAYNILAD WATER

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Effective February 1, 2006, the Concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Manila Water Company, Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc., will implement the 12% Value Added Tax as per Memorandum from Executive Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita dated January 31, 2006.

Caloocan marks 44th year

A JOB FAIR, FAMILY day and a mass wedding will be the highlights of a week-long celebration marking Caloocan City's 44th founding anniversary starting next week. Caloocan was declared a city on Feb. 16, 1962. "A family day would highlight the celebration to give importance to the family as the basic unit of society," said Alvin Feliciano, the city's public information officer. The mass wedding, on the other hand, will be open to unwed couples or those who want to get married but lack money. The wedding will be held at the Monumento Circle, in front of the Bonifacio monument, Feliciano said. Businessmen, on the other hand, will be allowed to display their products in a flea market to be put up by the city government for the occasion.

Nancy C. Carvajal

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF TANGALAN (AKLAN), INC.

1. Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 97 dated January 26, 2006 ordering the closure of the Rural Bank of Tangalan (Aklan), Inc. (RBTI), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed RBTI on Friday, February 3, 2006.
2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payout sites where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), from Monday to Friday, except holidays.

RBTI Office/ Branch	Payout Site/ Address	Duration of Initial Operations
Head Office	Tangalan, Aklan , West. Visayas	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006
Sigma Branch	Sigma, Capiz, West. Visayas	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 24, 2006

After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 6th Floor, SSS BLDG, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
2228 Chino Roces Avenue
1231 Makati City

3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:
   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit, or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
   b. Two (2) latest valid identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of Tangalan (Aklan) Inc., is on January 28, 2008. After January 28, 2008, PDIC, as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(PDI – February 2, 9 & 16, 2006)

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED MERCHANTS RURAL BANK OF TALAVERA (NUEVA ECIJA), INC.

Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 98 dated January 26, 2006 ordering the closure of the Merchants Rural Bank of Talavera (Nueva Ecija), Inc. (MRBTI), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed MRBTI on Friday, February 3, 2006.

2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payout sites where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), from Monday to Friday, except holidays.

MRBTI Office/ Branch	Payout Site/ Address	Duration of Initial Operations
Head Office (Sta. Rosa)	Cojuangco, Maharlika Highway, Sta. Rosa, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to March 1, 2006
Cabanatuan Branch	Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija (N.E.)	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 21, 2006
Cabiao Branch	San Juan North, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006
Gapan Branch	City of Gapan, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 14, 2006
Muñoz Branch	T. Delos Santos St., Science City of Muñoz, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006
San Jose Branch	San Jose City, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 14, 2006
Talavera Branch	Maharlika Highway, Poblacion, Talavera, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006
Zaragoza Branch	Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 21, 2006

After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 6th Floor, SSS BLDG, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

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   b. Two (2) latest valid identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Merchants Rural Bank of Talavera Inc., is on January 28, 2008. After January 28, 2008, PDIC, as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(PDI – February 2, 9 & 16, 2006)

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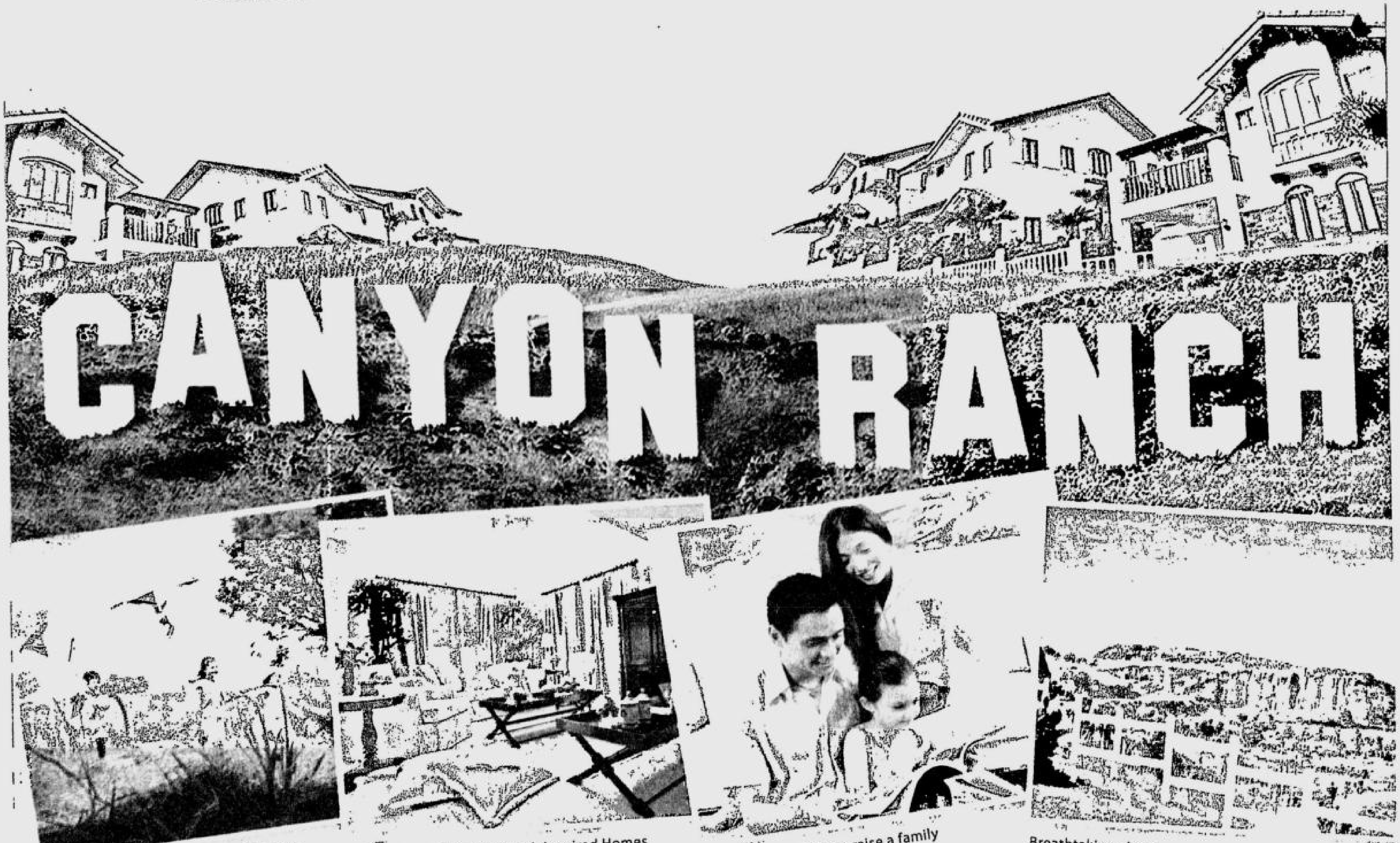

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PDI PHOTO

ESTHER Marie Singson after winning the bantamweight gold in the SEAG.

Honest mistake, says embattled SEAG titlist

By Musong R. Castillo

A DAY AFTER SHE WAS IDENTIFIED by a sports official as the athlete who failed a dope test, Esther Marie Singson yesterday said she committed an honest mistake and had no intention to cheat during the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, where she won a gold medal in the bantamweight division of taekwondo.

"I hope I am not judged as a cheat," Singson said in Filipino. "I never took anything with the intention to get high or to cheat."

Singson tested positive for diuretics, a drug used by physicians to induce urine flow on patients with hypertension and pulmonary edema and one often used by athletes to lose weight. Diuretics are banned substances because they serve as masking agents for steroids.

The drug is an ingredient in a popular herbal slimming tea which Singson took to shed off extra pounds and make the bantamweight grade for the SEA Games.

The Philippine Taekwondo Association and the University of Santo Tomas sporting community backed Singson's claims and rallied behind the athlete, who yesterday was named Most Valuable Player in the taekwondo competitions of the UAAP, which UST swept.

"It was an honest mistake on her part," said taekwondo president Robert Aventajado, also the Philippine Olympic Committee chair. "We have to stress the fact that diuretics do not in any way affect the athlete's performance, and that she tested negative for steroids."

"We will not impose any sanction on Singson at the moment," added Aventajado over the phone. "We will wait for the decision of the WTF (World Taekwondo Federation) before taking any action. We stand by the innocence of our athlete."

Singson stands to be stripped of her gold medal and cash incentives given by the government.

"I am sad at the possibility of losing my medal because I really worked hard for this," a friend quoted Singson as saying. "But I'm also thankful for the support thrown by the PTA and the UST community."

Felicitas Francisco, deputy director of the UST Institute of Physical Education and Athletics, also backed Singson's claim, saying: "We don't believe she's capable of cheating. As far as the [institute] is concerned, she has our full support."

IPEA director Fr. Nat de Sagun advised Singson not to shed tears over the incident, telling the athlete that "she didn't do anything intentionally wrong."

According to Aventajado, Singson admitted to having taken herbal slimming tea last October to

HONEST/ A21

Air21, Ginebra stay afloat

By June Navarro

RENREN RITUALO CAN MAKE AN IMPACT FOR his team even without playing offense.

Struggling with his shots, Ritualo slowed down the spitfirish James Yap instead as Air21 stayed alive in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference semifinals with a narrow 100-99 win over Purefoods last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

But it was another Yap, Roger, who blew the game away for the Giants as he fumbled after receiving a pass under the basket from Kerby Raymundo in the closing seconds.

Roger Yap had scored the three-pointer that moved Purefoods within one with 34.5 seconds remaining. Earlier, Raymundo completed a rare four-point play that brought the Giants within 96-99 with 64 seconds to go.

Ritualo, who went four of 18 from the field and finished with 12 points, hounded James Yap going into the final stretch after the Purefoods gunner fired 11 straight points, including three triples, that brought the Giants back to life.

"I told Renren to put the cuffs on James (Yap) and give him no space to hit his shots," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol, who extended the best-of-seven series to six games.

Nursing a high fever since Game 4, Ritualo had heavy legs throughout.

"I was shaking on the court and couldn't get my rhythm," said Ritualo, last week's PBA Press Corps Player of the Week.

Shawn Daniels won his matchup with Chandler after scoring 22 points and grabbing 21 rebounds to pace the Express in their third do-or-die game in the conference.

In the second game, Rodney Santos fired 11 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and Chris Porter had 27 points and a conference-high 26 rebounds as Barangay Ginebra also stayed alive with a 97-83 victory over an importless Red Bull Barako.

The scores:

FIRST GAME:

AIR21 100—De Ocampo 23, Daniels 22, Tubid 15, Ritualo 12, Canaleta 8, Arboleda 8, Se 6, Ferriols 4, De Ocampo 2, Gonzales 0, Fran 0.

PUREFOODS 99—Yap 25, Raymundo 22, Chandler 18, Limpot 8, Yap 8, Salvador 6, Pingris 6, Castillo 4, Billones 2, Simon 0, Yee 0.

Quarters: 26-27, 52-53, 80-68, 100-99.

Second Game

GINEBRA 97—Porter 27, Menk 19, Santos 15, Macapagal 8, Adducul 8, Caguioa 8, Salvacion 6, Helterbrand 6, Dimaunahan 0.

RED BULL 83—Tugade 20, Fonacier 10, Cruz 10, Villanueva 10, Baguio 9, Pennisi 9, Valenzuela 7, Najorda 4, Robinson 2, Rodriguez 2, Bugia 0, Torion 0.

Quarters: 28-26, 52-54, 71-72, 97-83

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Feb 8	PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT W/ HLURB RULES & UPDATES
Feb 13	HOW TO START & MANAGE A SUCCESSFUL REALTY OFFICE
Feb 15	LEGAL ASPECT OF SALE, MORTGAGE & LEASE WITH CONTRACT DOCUMENTATION AND REGISTRATION
Feb 20	JOINT VENTURES FOR REAL ESTATE PROJECTS
Feb 22	TAXATION ASPECTS OF REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS AND PROPERTY ASSESSMENT
Feb 27	REAL ESTATE FINANCE AND INVESTMENT ANALYSIS
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Mar 6	HOW TO'S OF REAL PROPERTY VALUATION
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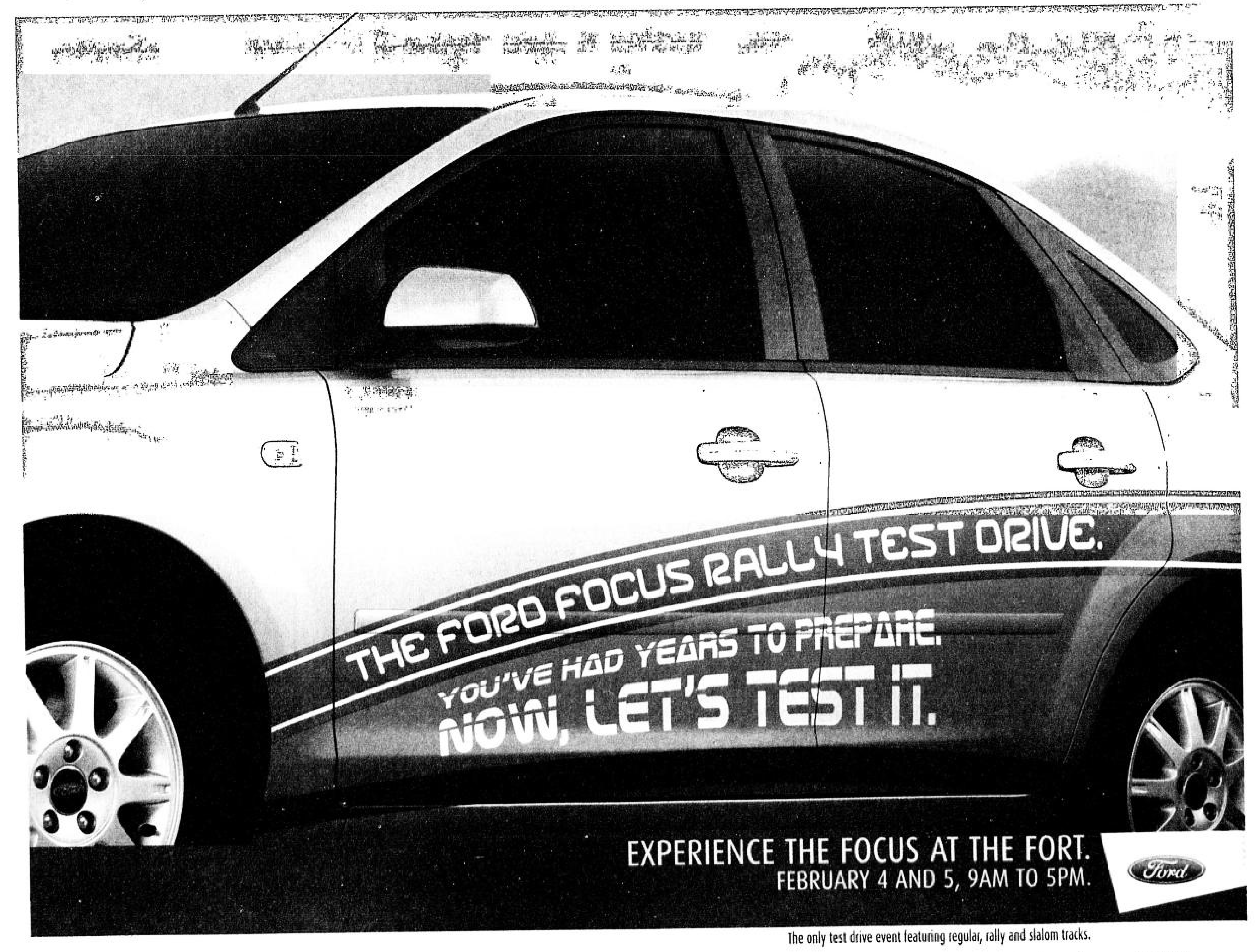
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Seahawks MVP Alexander the great's just another kid

DETROIT—THERE IS SOMEBODY WHO can beat NFL MVP Shaun Alexander at his own game.

Erik Anderson, the founder of the American Foundation for ... Chess?

Alexander said the Seattle-area entrepreneur is the last person to beat him at one of his many loves outside of American football.

"Yep, first or second week of the season. But he got lucky," Alexander said, feigning disgust.

Alexander is at the top of his day-job profession this week, a potential Seattle Seahawks free agent, league rushing champion and NFL record holder with 28 touchdowns this season. And he is about to play in its ultimate game, Sunday's Super Bowl against Pittsburgh.

Yet chess is just one of the many sides to Alexander most people never see.

He has a foundation in his name that focuses on leadership and character modeling for fatherless, teenage men.

"I love seeing young men go finish high school, going to college, getting married. It's a great honor to help kids do that," he said.

In many ways, the 28-year-old Alexander is a kid himself. He loves Eddie Murphy movies and puts them on one of the four DVD players aboard the team plane for each Seahawks road trip.

He devours M&Ms just before he beats defenders on one of his many cutback runs.

There is more than pawns and bishops to Alexander's relationship with Anderson.

Anderson's nonprofit chess federation has also started a program to teach chess to grade-school children across the United States to improve critical thinking, math and problem-solving skills.

During a recent midweek off day, Alexander was inside a children's playroom in suburban Seattle. A television camera caught him working up a sweat while rolling around on mats, dancing, clapping to music and playing miniature basketball with a small group of kids who treated him like just another playmate instead of a multimillion dollar NFL star. *AP*

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
Section I. Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
Republic of the Philippines
National Transmission Corporation
PRINTING OF TRANSCO DISPATCH, ANNUAL REPORT, AND WALL & DESK CALENDARS
Ref. No. PB060119-PP0003

1. The *NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION Head Office Region* (TRANSCO-HO) through the *2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TransCo Board* intends to apply the sum of **Php 3,350,000.00 (Item 1 : Php 720,000.00 / Item 2: Php 380,000.00 / Item 3 : Php 2,550,000.00)** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract *for PR No. CCD-06-000014269/Printing of TransCo 2006 Dispatch (Item 1), 2005 Annual Report (Item 2) and 2007 Desk & Wall Calendars (Item 3).* Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the *Printing of TransCo 2006 Dispatch, 2005 Annual Report and 2007 Desk & Wall Calendars.* Delivery of the GOODS is required as follows: ***Item 1: five (5) working days after approval of final proof / Item 2 : ten (10) working days after approval of final proof / Item 3 : fifteen (15) working days after approval of final proof.*** The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from *January 26, 2006 to February 22, 2006* at the address below and upon payment of a non refundable fee in the amount of *Php 1,000.00*. The method of payment will be *Cash*. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The *TRANSCO-HO* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Interested parties on *February 09, 2006/3:30 P.M. at the address below.*
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before *February 23, 2006/10:00 A.M.* All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

FORM OF SECURITY	AMOUNT
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of ABC)	Item 1 : Php7,200.00 Item 2 : Php3,800.00 Item 3 : Php22,500.00 Total : Php33,500.00
2 Bank Guarantee (1.5% of ABC)	Item 1 : Php10,800.00 Item 2 : Php5,700.00 Item 3 : Php33,750.00 Total : Php50,250.00
3 Surety Bond (2.5% of ABC)	Item 1 : Php18,000.00 Item 2 : Php9,500.00 Item 3 : Php56,250.00 Total : Php83,750.00
4. Foreign Government Guarantee (100% of ABC)	Item 1 : Php720,000.00 Item 2 : Php380,000.00 Item 3 : Php2,250,000.00 Total : Php3,350,000.00

7. Bid opening shall be on *February 23, 2006/10:00 A.M.* at the *Admin Conference Room same address below.* Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The *National Transmission Corporation* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region
Mr. Armando N. Ochoa, BAC Chairman
MMD Office, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg.
Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. (632) 9812207 / Fax No. (632) 9228432
Website: www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) ARMANDO N. OCHOA
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI – January 27 & February 2, 2006)

Lakers ride Kobe anew

Bryant torches Knicks, joins Wilt in history

NEW YORK—KOBE BRYANT IS back in Wilt Chamberlain's company again.

Kobe Bryant scored 40 points to cap one of the highest scoring months in NBA history by guiding the Los Angeles Lakers to a 130-97 thrashing of the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday.

Bryant shot 7-for-17 from the floor and went to the free throw line 26 times, making 23 of those attempts, to wind up averaging 43.4 points per game for the month of January.

It was the second time Bryant had averaged more than 40 points in one month—February 2003 was the other—as the Lakers wound up taking 58 free throws and New York had their coach Larry Brown ejected.

Chamberlain is the only other player to have averaged 40 points in a month more than once and he did it five times in his career. Elgin Baylor also averaged 40 points in a month, but only once.

Bryant's month was highlighted by a spectacular 81-point performance against the Toronto Raptors, the second highest scoring game in NBA history behind Chamberlain's 100-point effort in 1962.

With the Lakers well ahead, Bryant left the game with five and a half minutes remaining to rapturous applause from the New York fans.

"It feels good," Bryant told reporters after the game.

"It let's me know that they appreciate what I do out there on the floor."

Brown was ejected for arguing with referee Steve Javie after getting a technical foul in the third quarter following a slew of New York fouls.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jason Kidd had 23 points and 12 rebounds to help the Nets snap the Detroit Pistons' NBA-best 11-game winning streak via a 91-84 win.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas scored 20 points, and Antawn Jamison had 19 points and 18 rebounds to lead the Wizards over the Indiana Pacers, 84-79.

The Pacers lost their sixth straight game in a mostly ineffective debut for Peja Stojakovic.

Stojakovic, acquired last week from the Sacramento Kings for Ron Artest, scored 17 points on 4-for-10 shooting.

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 21 points, the most important an open 3-pointer that helped prevent a major second-half meltdown and stretching the Mavericks season-best winning streak to nine straight via a 98-94 triumph over the Bulls.

In Sacramento, California, Ron Artest scored 19 points in his home debut, Kevin Martin added a career-high 25 and the Kings held on for their 19th straight home victory over the Denver Nuggets, 98-91. *AP, Reuters*

NBA on Solar Sports: 10 a.m.—Denver vs. Utah (replay at 8 p.m.)

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT
263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City
Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 433-5032, 433-6802
Fax No. (48) 433-6803

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent
Location	Puerto Princesa City Water District
Brief Description	One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent, powered by 6 cylinder diesel engine, 6 wheelers, manual transmission, 6 cubic meter water tank, original Japan stainless equipped with standard hose with roller, 900 x 200 with one spare, 8 stud bolts, brand new batteries and complete standard tools
Approved Budget for the Contract	Six Hundred Thousand Pesos (P600,000.00)
Delivery Period	Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

Activities	Schedule
1 Issuance of Bid Documents	January 30, 2006 – February 17, 2006
2 Pre-Bid Conference	February 8, 2006, 1:30 P.M., PPCWD Board Room
3 Deadline for Submission of Bids	February 23, 2006 1:30 P.M., PPCWD Board Room
4 Opening of Bids	February 23, 2006, 1:30 PM, PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (Php500.00) to the Puerto Princesa City Water District Cashier

The Puerto Princesa City Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid

Approved by

(Sgd.) ENGR. VICENTE D. ABREA
PPCWD BAC Chairman

(PDI–Jan. 26 & Feb. 2, 2006)

BREEZY TRIUMPH Switzerland's Martina Hingis returns the ball against Cho Yoon-jeong of South Korea during a first round match of the Toray Pan Pacific Open women's tennis tournament in Tokyo, Wednesday. Hingis won, 6-0, 6-0, to advance to the round-of-16. Hingis is making a comeback after a three-year injury-induced layoff from the sport. She played in the Australian Open and managed to make the quarterfinals, where she was eliminated by World No. 1 Kim Clijsters. AP

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region - 10
Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City

NOTICE OF CORNGRAINS SALE THROUGH AUCTION

The National Food Authority, Cagayan de Oro City (NFA-10) wishes to invite all corn users to participate in the sale of Yellow Corngrains (YGN) and White Corngrains (WGN) through Auction in the following NFA-Warehouses under the jurisdiction of NFA-Bukidnon as follows:

LOT NO.	NAME OF WAREHOUSE/ LOCATION	VOLUME (In kg) MORE OR LESS	VARIETY/ COMMODITY CODE	FLOOR RICE per kg EX-WHSE INCLUDING CONTAINER (In Php)
1	GID AGLAYAN, MALAYBALAY, BUKIDNON	11,806.00	YGN	8.60
2	GID MUSUAN, MARAMAG, BUKIDNON	41,122.70	YGN	8.50
	GID MARAMAG, MARAMAG, BUKIDNON	63,586.18	YGN	
3	GID KALILANGAN, KALILANGAN, BUKIDNON	87,778.99	YGN	8.30
4	GID WAO, WAO, LANAO SUR	259,502.03	YGN	8.20
5	GID AGLAYAN, MALAYBALAY, BUKIDNON	13,726.52	WGN	8.60
6	GID MUSUAN, MARAMAG, BUKIDNON	33,575.72	WGN	8.50
	GID MARAMAG, MARAMAG, BUKIDNON	25,812.86	WGN	
7	GID KALILANGAN, KALILANGAN, BUKIDNON	437,424.57	WGN	8.30
8	GID WAO, WAO, LANAO SUR	29,969.55	WGN	8.20

Qualified Buyers:

1. All Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) registered corn users and processors, and NFA registered poultry & hog raisers, processors and feed millers.
2. NFA licensed Corn Users/Corn Millers/Corn Processors.
3. An authorized representative shall be allowed to participate in the bidding provided he/she is covered by a notarized Special Power of Attorney for sole proprietorship and Board Resolution for partnership/cooperative certifying that he/she is presently connected with the entity as an official employee/stock holder and is authorized to represent the same in the bidding.

The Corngrains stocks are stored in warehouses under NFA-Bukidnon jurisdiction with its corresponding floor price/kg on whole lot, "as-is-where-is, no selection basis".

All interested offerors are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 10% of the total amount offered in the form of Cash, Demand Draft, Manager's Check/Cashier's Check issued by a reputable Cagayan de Oro City bank payable to NFA.

Terms and Conditions, and Bid Forms will be available at BAC Secretariat, NFA, Regional Office 10, Cagayan de Oro City after payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00. The NFA encourages all interested offerors to conduct an ocular inspection of the subject stocks prior to the auction.

Schedule of Activities:

ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME	VENUE
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 02-07, 2006 (working days only)	8 00 AM to 5 00 PM	2nd Floor, Conference Room, NFA-Regional Office 10, Cagayan de Oro City
2. Pre-Auction	February 08, 2006	10 00 AM	
3 Deadline for Submission of Bids	February 10, 2006	10.00 AM	
4 Opening of Bids	February 10, 2006	10 05 AM	

The National Food Authority, Region 10 assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders of any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid

The National Food Authority, Region 10 reserves the right to reject any or all offers, to waive any defect or informality found therein, and accept only such offers, which in its judgment, are most reasonable and advantageous to the NFA

(Sgd.) CAMILO D. MAGTRAYO
Asst. Reg'l Director/Chairman, BAC-10

(PDI - Feb 2 & 3, 2006)

BCDA

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
Republic of the Philippines

Construction of Concrete Overpasses in the Provinces of Bataan and Tarlac

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), through the BCDA 2006 Corporate Funds, intends to apply the corresponding sum listed hereunder being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

Name of Project	Brief Description	Approved Budget for the Contract	Source of Funds
Construction of Concrete Overpasses	Construction of the following: Ligaya Overpass (Tarlac) Tinang Overpass (Tarlac) Pilaburan Overpass (Tarlac Sto Overpass (Tarlac) Hacienda Lusita (Tarlac) San Ramon Overcrossing Bridge (Bataan) Maite Overcrossing Bridge (Bataan)	P146,000,000.00	Corporate Funds

BCDA now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the Construction of Concrete Overpasses. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license of at least AAA, Large B, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs on **06-08 February 2006, 8:00am to 5:00pm**, at BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00). Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents **21 February 2006, 5:00PM** at BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC Secretariat at BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before **21 February 2006, 5:00PM**.

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from BCDA and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. on 01 March 2006

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the Bidder or his authorized representative on **01-03 March 2006, 8:00am to 5:00pm.**

BCDA will hold a **Pre-Bid Conference** open to all Eligible Bidders on **07 March 2006, 10:00am**, at the BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before 10:00 am of 03 April 2006

All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form:

a. Cash, managers check, cashiers' check, irrevocable letter of credit, or bank draft – one percent (1%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract
b. Bank Guarantee – one and a half percent (1½ %) of the Approved Budget for the Contract
c. Surety Bond from a reputable insurance company accredited by the Insurance Commission – two and a half percent (2½ %) of the Approved Budget for the Contract

Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **10:30am of 03 April 2006** at BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below on **10:30am of 03 April 2006**

Completion of the Works is required by a total of One Hundred Twenty (120) calendar days

BCDA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
GEN NARCISO L. ABAYA (RET.) - President and CEO
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center
31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City
Telephone Number (632) 816-6666 Telfax No. (632) 816-0996
Website www.bcda.gov.ph

(Sgd.) VICTOR V. ZABLAN
Chairman, BAC for SCTEP

(PDI-Jan 26 & Feb 2 2006)

Riviera sweeps Alabang ladies in Fed League

Standings (*Win-Draw-Loss-Game Points*)
Group 1: Highlands 1-0-1-3, Orchard 1-0-1-2, Northwoods 1-0-1-2, Wack Wack 1-0-0-2, Southwoods 0-0-1-0
Group 2: Riviera 1-0-0-3, Sta. Elena 1-0-0-2, Forest Hills 0-0-1-0, Alabang 0-0-1-0

RIVIERA COMPLETED A THREE-GAME SWEEP of highly fancied Alabang in the opening matches recently of the Ladies Federation Golf League played in various courses.

Rosie Guerrero and Maripaz Domingo won in the alternate shots, Marthy del Rosario and Beth Menchavez took the high-low format and Berna Jalosjos and jungolf Cyna Rodriguez prevailed in aggregate play to pull off the big win in Riviera's debut outing.

The victory gave the Rivierans 3 points, including an extra point for the solo lead in Group 2.

Reigning champion Tagaytay Highlands split its first two games against Royal Northwoods and Wack Wack but leads Group 1 with three points.

The Highlanders first demolished Northwoods, 3-0, to earn an extra point but lost to Wack Wack in its next outing, 1-2. Jungolfer Katya dela Cruz who keyed that Wack Wack victory by making a short putt on the last hole.

Sta. Elena, last year's losing finalist, scored a 2-1 win over Forest Hills.

Vinice Godio and Shirley Romualdez won in alternate shot and Therese Dabao-Candice Yulo claimed the high-low action as Sta. Elena countered Forest Hills' Violy Pegels and Lily Young win.

Orchard and Northwoods are tied for second with Wack Wack in Group 1 after contrasting results of the tournament organized by the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines Inc.

Northwoods of Bulacan scored a 2-1 win over Orchard, which had earlier defeated Manila Southwoods via a similar 2-1 decision.

Teams play home and away matches with their group mates with the top two teams advancing to the semifinals. The semifinalists then clash in another home-and-away series for the two slots to the finals.

Many NSAs still shun SEC listing

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMmission is finding ways to make life easy for the national sports associations which have yet to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

PSC chair Butch Ramirez yesterday admitted that there are a number of NSAs which don't have SEC registration, a major requirement in securing funds from the PSC.

"But they are our partners in sports development," said Ramirez, who sat down with the NSAs last Friday. "You don't make life difficult for your partners."

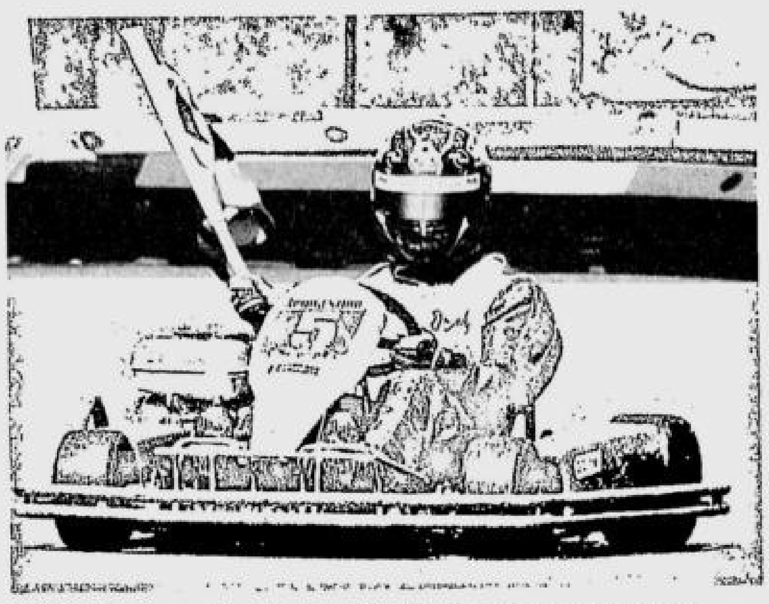
Still, the PSC chief said the NSAs must first clear their accounts with the PSC before getting fresh funds on top on having to register with the SEC.

The PSC said most of the non-SEC registrants among the 44 NSAs cited possible trouble with their respective international federations, which frown on government intervention in sports.

Ramirez said he told the unregistered NSAs to just write the Commission of Audit to request for funds with arrangements for liquidation later.

Otherwise, he said the PSC would have to give out the funds directly to the athletes or make payments straight to the suppliers in case of purchase of equipment or other training aids.

The PSC-NSAs consultative meeting came on the heels of the reported P86 million unliquidated funds from last year's Southeast Asian Games training. *Marc Anthony Reyes*



TYSON Sy waves the checkered flag for the Altronics/WL Team.

Altronics-WL wins; Sy is fastest driver

ALTRONICS-WL BESTED SEVEN other teams in the Manila Speedzone 24 Hours Endurance Kart Race 2006 held Jan. 28 to 29 at the Manila Speedzone track, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig.

The Elson Carpio-managed Altronics-WL, which was captained by Formula 3 sensation Tyson Sy and composed of AF3 champion Pepon Marave, Albert Lagman, Jonathan Dael, James Co, Niño Espinosa, David Palma, Michael Palmiery, Jeff de Vera, Jojit Melchor, Eugene Okuda and Raymund Ronquillo, logged a total of 1,464 laps.

Sy, who started for the team and drove for 3 hours and 26 minutes, built up a lead of eight laps and clinched the fastest driver award with a time of 55.503 seconds.

Defending champion Team Bridgestone, managed by Steven Tagle and featuring star karters Marlon Stockinger, Stefano Marcelo, John Marcelo, Marlon Stockinger, Mark Bumgarner, Philip Alvendia, Jeff Reyes, Marc Tagle, Gino Ongpauco, Marty Aguilar, Ivan Carapiet and Indy Villalon, placed second with a total of 1,449 laps.

Third place went to PLDT-Nokia-AF3, which was led by internationalist Angelo Barretto, Alistair Jackson, Juha Roiha, Timo Koponen, Esa Antirenen and AF3 guns Dado Peña, Mark Goddard, John O'Hara and Edgen Dy-Liacco, with 1,416 laps.

The event was sponsored by Bridgestone, Denso, Castrol, Addict Mobile, PLDT myDSL, WL Foods, Asian Spirit, Canon, Pharmaton, Maalox, Nestle, Red Bull, Edge Consulting and Airborne Access.

Wizards, Painters title series begins

Coaches: Players commitment is key

GAMES TODAY *(San Andres Gym)*
2 p.m.—Granny Goose vs Harbour Centre
(Knockout for 3rd)
4 p.m.—Rain or Shine vs Magnolia
(Game 1 Finals)

GARCIA

BANAL

FOR THE TWO CHAMPION MENtors, total commitment by all players will be the key when Rain or Shine and Magnolia Ice Cream clash for the PBL Heroes Cup in a best-of-five series starting today at the San Andres Gym.

"We want a team effort," said coach Caloy Garcia, who will try to steer Rain or Shine to a second straight crown. "We don't want to mention any names because I still believe that in our last game, it was our second stringers who brought us to the championship."

Magnolia coach Koy Banal also doesn't want to depend too much on his starters, led by league stars Arwind Santos and Kelly Williams.

"We can't rely on just five players," he said. "The key will be the bench scoring, the bench participation."

The 4 p.m. championship series starts after Granny Goose and Harbour Centre dispute third spot in a 2 p.m. knockout match.

"Both teams are capable of winning the championship," said Garcia. "It's hard to go up against Magnolia. We're 1-1 in our series."

Magnolia appeared to be the more dominant team in their two elimination encounters. The Wizards routed the Painters, 74-57, in their first match. The Painters evened up matters but barely edged the Wizards, 69-68.

But for Banal, the previous games are no longer relevant.

The top-ranked Elasto Painters are riding high on a seven-game streak, the longest winning run this conference.

"They have the advantage because of their championship experience and their run during the elimination round," noted Banal.

Jojo Tangkay, a strong candidate for the Most Valuable Player plum, has been leading the Painters' offensive charge although he was sidelined with a knee injury in their last outing.

Garcia, though, isn't worried because he has enough able bodies to turn to lead by block-shot leader Jay-R Reyes, veterans Marvin Ortiguerra and Eugene Tan, and young gunners Ronjay Enrile and Jun Jun Cabatu.

Aside from Santos and Williams, the Wizards are also loaded with clutch performers including Jeff Chan, RJ Rizada, Kim Valenzuela and Mark Isip.

Both the Wizards and the Painters are coming off tough semifinal rounds. Magnolia narrowly escaped Granny Goose in two consecutive double-overtime games, while Rain or Shine also figured in two tight matches versus Harbour Centre. *Jasmine W. Payo*

UAAP to meet on La Salle cage leave

By Jasmine W. Payo

LA SALLE'S DECISION TO SKIP one basketball season has prompted the UAAP board yesterday to set an emergency meeting on Feb. 8 to discuss the unprecedented move.

La Salle earlier filed a one-year leave of absence from the men's basketball tournament in an attempt to rebuild its cage program rocked by the eligibility scandal involving Archers Mark Benitez and Tim Gatchalian.

Problems could arise, however, since a league rule states that a member school cannot pull out of one of two compulsory sports: basketball and volleyball.

The UAAP board already assured that it would soon put a closure on the case when its fact-finding committee submits its decision and recommendations by the end of the month.

Suspension is among the possible sanctions the league could impose, with some league representatives citing some similarities with the Adamson basketball scandal involving Marlou Aquino 12 years ago.

The league suspended the Falcons from all sports in the 1994 season for fielding Aquino in the seniors tournament despite academic deficiencies.

Board representatives, though, have begged off from commenting on the La Salle issue since "it could preempt the findings" of the five-man investigating panel.

The committee has summoned key personalities for interview to shed light on the case.

Aside from the planned pullout, La Salle has offered to return its 2004 championship trophy after announcing last October that it unknowingly fielded two ineligible players for three years.

Benitez and Gatchalian submitted fake certificates of their Philippine Educational Placement Test, an exam taken in lieu of a high school diploma, to gain entry in La Salle. Both played for the 2004 champion Archers.

Poker prize; Southern Ladies challenge

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I DIDN'T KNOW THE CHAMPION OF THE Philippine Poker Tour/Hold'em Championship will pocket P1 million. Wow! Hey, Pareng Rey (Gamboa), why didn't you tell me?

Rey, of course, is the organizer of the event set April 8-9 at the airport's Casino Filipino in Parañaque.

Rey tells me venues for the qualifying events are still open and details can be had by calling 817-9092 or 812-0153.

"Not only will the champ pocket P1 million," Rey says. "He will also win the champion's gold bracelet. That's the equivalent of the Green Jacket for the Masters champion in golf."

Oh, well, the prizes—they're a steal really!

I only get to watch poker on Solar Sports. And it's really a thrill watching celebrities play it. One time, I saw Dennis Rodman, a teammate of Michael Jordan when the Chicago Bulls won six NBA titles in the Nineties, play poker. As usual, he was fun to watch.

I usually play poker only in December, during breaks of my coverage of the Fil-Am Golf Invitational in Baguio City. My poker mates include Des Bautista, Art Ng, Gov. Rocky Molintas, Roger B. Flores, Jake P. Ayson, Taby Tabaniag and Florencio Campomanes.

One day when I'm not too busy, I'll try joining your tournament, Rey.

Sure, more than the fun, the chance of having a crack at your P1 million is a come-on like no other.

Catch you later, Rey.

* * *

I am glad that kids like Mia Piccio and Crystal Superal, both not yet 14 mind you, are entered in the Southern Ladies Golf Championship that begins today at the fabled Del Monte Golf Club in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. Mia and Crystal are among our brightest prospects in the game.

You see, if we want our children to really improve their game quicker, we should encourage them to play in as many tournaments as possible.

Let's start 'em young, goes the saying.

So, let's expose them to big-league events to toughen them up, in heart and in mind. There's no substitute to unleashing our kids in tournaments that offer sure-fire challenges.

And, for golfers in the hunt for worthy events, the Southern Ladies is a must-join tournament, especially for girls aspiring to some day hit the big time.

Many of our established stars today have played in the Southern Ladies, a tournament organized by the National Golf Association of the Philippines and that's been running for almost five decades now. Most of the credit for the tournament's longevity goes to a lady named Alice Andrada, an NGAP director under whose baton the Southern Ladies has had glorious years—then and now.

"We will not stop staging this tournament because it has been proven that this event is a factory for future stars of the game," says Alice, who could sit with her wealth just listening to Billie Holiday and Barbra Streisand but has elected to nurse the tournament that's been with us for the last 43 years.

Name it, and they've played in the Southern Ladies at least once or twice. Jennifer Rosales. Ruby Chico. Yvette de Leon. Mary Grace Estuesta. Jamille Jose. Sonia Tugot. Jayvie Agojo. Frances Bondad. Heidi Chua. Carmelette Villaroman. Lina de Guzman. Lora Roberto. Grace Ebalde. And a slew more whose names escape my mind at the moment. All champions.

I had wished to see Agojo play and defend her crown she won last year at Pueblo de Oro in Cagayan de Oro City. But her studies at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles prevented her from coming.

So with Frances Bondad, the 2005 Philippine ladies champion, who studies in Sydney, Australia.

I also had wished to see Debbie de Villa play. But the reigning Philippine Ladies Open champion was also stymied by her schooling.

How I wished we could someday see schools granting leniency to students with potentials to gain honors for the country through sports.

That will, indeed, be the day.

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

Southern Ladies gets going at Del Monte

THE 43RD SOUTHERN LADIES Open unfolds today with prospects of another spirited battle high among members of the national pool and a slew of talented players, including three jungolfers, at the Del Monte Golf Club in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Anya Tanpinco, Carmelette Villaroman and Lora Roberto of Manila Southwoods head the cast in the centerpiece championship division, which also features teeners Crystal Superal, Mia Piccio and Cyna Rodriquez.

The other player to watch is Lina de Guzman of Canlubang, who is out to rule the three-day event after winning it in 2003.

Meanwhile, Mizuno is staking a brand-new Mizuno Comp. CT golf set as hole-in-one prize on No. 16, according to the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP).

Tanpinco, Roberto and Villaroman, all internationalists and many-time members of the national squad, are expected to fight it out for the top plum with Superal, Piccio and Rodriguez fancied to carry the cudgels for the youth brigade.

Spruced up to championship condition, the par-72 course is likewise expected to provide a different kind of challenge for the field with its rolling layout and unpredictable putting surface.

Also on tap in the event, sponsored by Petron Corp., DHL Worldwide Express/WWW Express, Gopez Corp. and Hans Bruhmann Int'l. Jeweler, are the classification tournaments with fabulous prizes at stake.

Aside from Manila Southwoods, other clubs competing in the tournament, backed by Philippine Sports Commission, DPC Yellow Pages, U-Bix and Rep. Constantino Jaraula of Cagayan de Oro, are Alabang, Apo, Canlubang, Cebu, Riviera, Sta. Elena, Orchard, Valley, Pueblo de Oro, Villamor, Lanang, Davao, Navy, Iligan and host Del Monte.

SPORTSWATCH

Olympian archer laid to rest

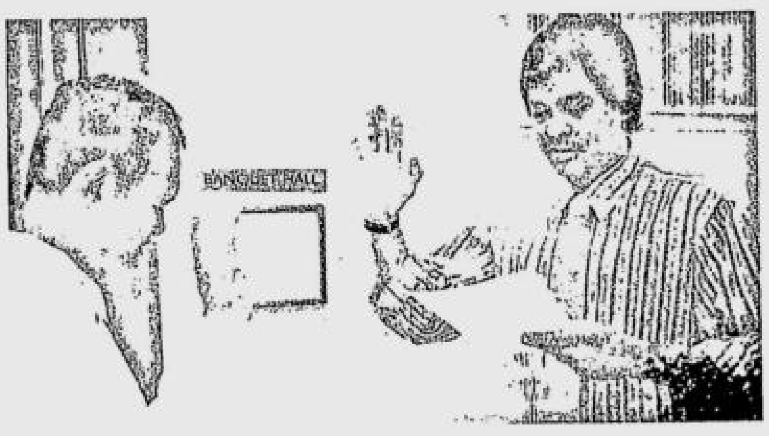
OLYMPIAN ARCHER CARLOS "JUN" S. SANTOS JR. OF PASIG CITY, PASSED away last Friday at the age of 66. He was survived by his wife Rita; children Chato, Winnie and Roy, Jean and Joseph, and Gian; grandchildren Benjo, Joie and Iana; brothers and sisters Isagani and Virginia, Epigenia and Agripino, Efren and Emma (deceased), Francisco and Salvacion, Ernesto (+) and Lourdes, Hermosa and Manuel and Emerita and Bobby; relatives and friends. He was laid yesterday at the Manila Memorial Park. Santos competed in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

27 entries lead Roligon derby

TWENTY-SEVEN COCKERS, WITH TWO WINS EACH, ARE THE EARLY PACESETters in Roligon Mega Cockpit's 16th Anniversary 6-cock derby which began Monday. Host Rolly Ligon said total entries ballooned to a record 429. The second round of eliminations will start at 2 p.m today. with 116 fights lined up. Among the qualifiers were Randy Rodelio (Mavison), Jeff Dumalaog (Dumas Pride), Ed Patawaran of Bulacan (EMP I and II), Allan Chan (MC AC Wild Wings), Art de Castro (Obando Warriors), Romero Yu (Roxy Loyalty Bet), Ronald Manalansan (RPM 528), Noel Tan (Batang Kalye), Bubot Booc (Tata Bubot) and Jun Manguera (Virjun VZ). Guaranteed prize is P4 million and a brand new Toyota Innova will be given to the fastest win champion. For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812.

Top cockers join Pacquiao derby

THIRTY-FIVE PROMINENT COCKERS HAVE PLEDGED THEIR SUPPORT TO boxing icon Manny Pacquiao, who is co-sponsor of the Pacquiao Big Event 8-cock derby on Feb. 6 and 8 at San Juan Coliseum with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Entered are Patrick Antonio, Jun Topacio and his American partner Gene Batia of Mississippi, Gov. Chavit Singson, Representatives Gerry "Boy" Espina, Butch Pichay and Jing Paras, Pol Estrellado, Benjie Lim, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Jingco Brothers, Jet Fernando, Gov. Ito Ynares, Rey Briones, Nene Abello, Boy Royo, Max and Bebot Roxas, Dicky Lim and Boy de Roca. Participants are requested to attend the welcome party for Pacquiao tomorrow at Shangri-La Hotel-Edsa. For details, contact 0917-8041691 (Ariel).



TATAP PREXY: POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco (left) swears in Victor Valbuena as Table Tennis Association of the Philippines president during the recent induction rites at the Milky Way Restaurant in Makati City. Also sworn in were Freddie Jalasco, vice president; Dante Boquiren, secretary general; Johanna Alvarez, deputy secretary general and treasurer; Rufino Go, chair emeritus; Police Supt. Cesar Hawthorne Bina, auditor; Denise Marie Lacson, public relations and marketing officer and Glen Merete, corporate secretary.

Honest mistake...

From page A19

shed off two pounds and make the bantam limit of 55 kg for the SEAG.

That brand of slimming tea contained a huge amount of diuretics to make those who take it urinate their excess weight away.

But diuretics are banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) because of their ability to mask steroids, a performance-enhancing drug.

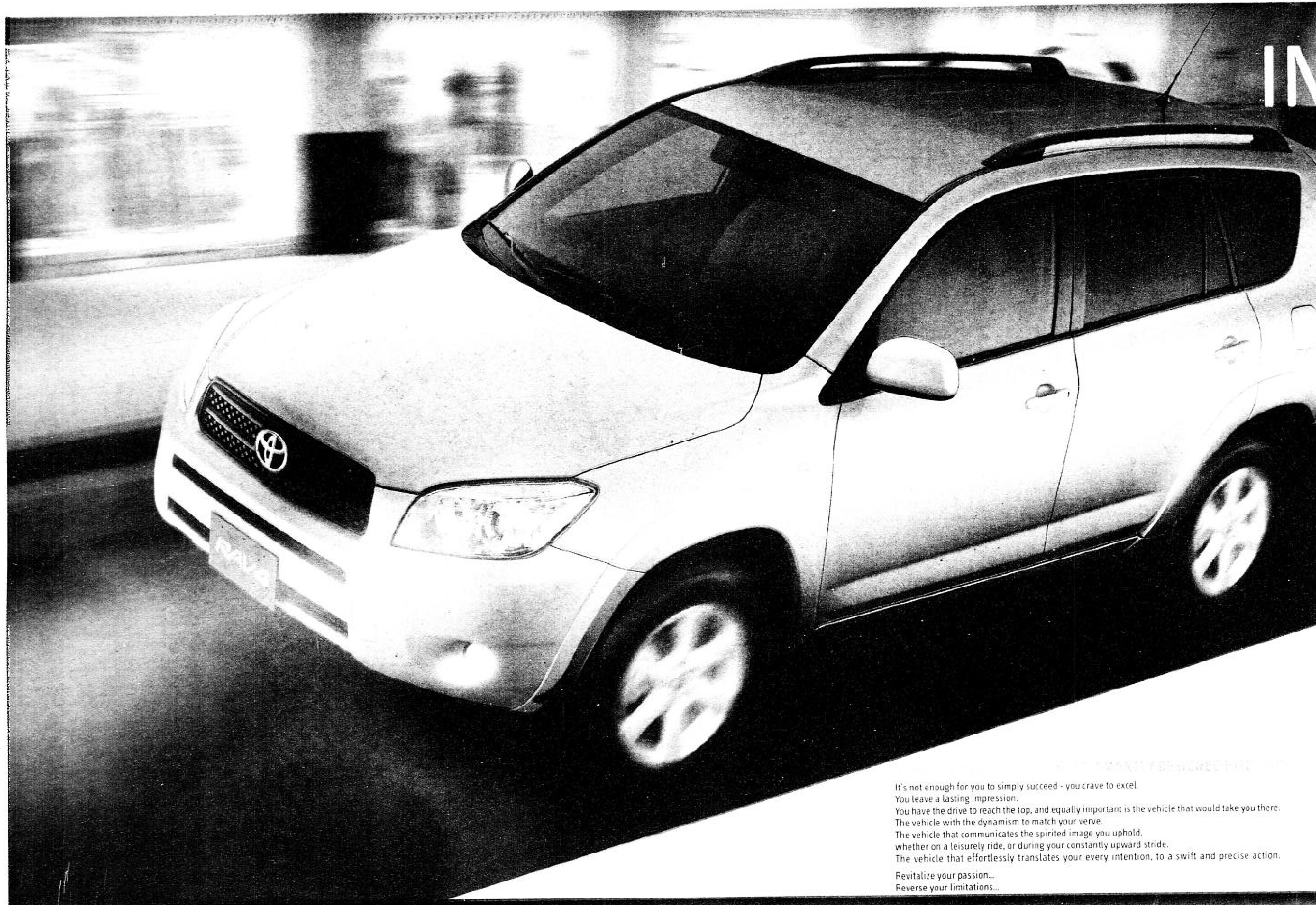
Dr. Raul Canlas, according to Aventajado, had conducted drug tests on all Filipino athletes last Nov. 22 which the whole taekwondo team passed. Problem was, the procedure did not check the athletes for the presence of diuretics in their systems.

The Wada website confirms the regulation on the use of diuretics. Wada also listed several reasons to issue a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) on the use of the drug—losing weight not being one of them.

Only those with illnesses or documented medical conditions can avail of the TUE and Singson does not fall under any of the categories.

Incidentally, a Malaysian who won the karate-do silver, also stands to lose her medal for also failing the drug test. Details of this case were also not revealed.

The final verdict on both cases will be known when the SEAG Federation meets in March in Malaysia.



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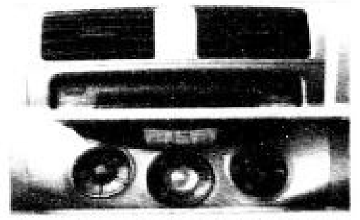

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Local records' success a victory over piracy

Manny's other gold

By Nini Valera

SPIN CITY

BARELY TWO WEEKS AFTER ITS release, Manny Pacquiao's first album titled "Para Sa 'Yo Ang Laban Na 'To" has turned gold, according to Star Records managing director Annabelle Regalado.

A gold album has sold at least 15,000 copies.

"Para Sa 'Yo," released last Jan. 15, was launched officially only last Sunday on ABS-CBN's "ASAP," which also became the venue for the boxer's victory party.

During the show, Pacquiao lip-synched the title cut produced by Lito Camo sharing center stage with a slight drizzle.

Later on "The Buzz," the boxing champ was prevailed upon by the show's hosts Boy Abunda, Kris Aquino and Cristy Fermin, to sing two lines from the song.

"My voice is hoarse," he said in Filipino. "I haven't slept [for] days." But true pro that he is, Pacquiao sang anyway. The song has become the new anthem for Filipinos since Pacquiao won his non-title bout with Mexican Erik Morales in Las Vegas, Nevada last Jan. 22.

Although definitely a better fighter than a singer—his voice is nowhere near extraordinary—the champ sang with heartfelt passion all eight songs on the CD. But it is the title cut, understandably, that best reflects the fighter in Pacquiao.

In "Ikaw at Ako," a duet with his wife Jinkee, Pacquiao is both playful and romantic. He rides on the novelty trend, which songwriter Lito Camo is famous for, in "Biyaheng Pag-asa" and takes a romantic turn in "Hindi Ko Kaya."

For whatever it's worth, Pacquiao's dalliance with music will forever be part of the Pinoy pop landscape.

MANNY Pacquiao and his wife Jinkee

Juris Fernandez and Chin Alcantara

Beyond cover versions

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

IVORY RECORDS HAS ANNOUNCED that M.Y.M.P.'s "Versions and Beyond" CD has gone seven times platinum.

In the Philippines, platinum means a record has sold 30,000 copies. "Versions and Beyond" is a double CD priced at P400. This means it has grossed a cool P84 million— despite piracy.

M.Y.M.P. is one proof that local bands are hitting the right notes for the record-buying public.

M.Y.M.P. (Make Your Mama Proud) is not even a band; it's a duo composed of female vocalist Juris Fernandez and male guitarist/singer Chin Alcantara. "Versions and Beyond" is their second album. For this recording, they hired session musicians John Angeles (drums/k-hon/percussions) and Andrew Advincula (bass).

Of the 24 tracks, 17 are covers ("versions"). Does this mean M.Y.M.P. took the easy route?

Whatever the reasons, these covers—"True Colors" (Cindy Lauper), "Especially For You" (Stock, Aitken & Waterman), "Say You Love Me" (Patty Austin), "Love Moves in Mysterious Ways" (Dean Pitchford & Tom Snow) and "Tell Me Where It Hurts" (Dianne Warren), for instance—have apparently won the approval of teenagers. Or at least they find the songs nice enough to sing along with.

Listening closely to these covers don't reveal any distinct quality—whether in Fernandez's singing or Alcantara's guitar-playing—that would make them stand out, for example, from other local or international acts who have intrepreted other artists' songs.

However, the very plainness and simplicity of it all seems to capture the appeal that makes M.Y.M.P. so lovable.

The original compositions are reassuring as well. "Magical Feeling" (co-written by Fernandez) plays around with irony that would make the unsuspecting do a double-take: "I'm happy you left me/I'm glad that you hurt me/It's a magical feeling/Knowing that you're not meant for me..."

"Get Me" and "Talaga Naman" (both written by Raymund Ryan) seems tailor-made for Fernandez, and their current heavy exposure on radio and TV would all the more gain sales for this album.

If the crowd that reportedly filled the Araneta Coliseum in the duo's last concert all paid for their tickets, Ivory Records has a major act in its stable.

The duo returns to the Big Dome tomorrow in a show titled "M.Y.M.P. Best—The Repeat."

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Cerrudo: Amore Classico, Cerrudo: Heart and Soul

Star: Bimbo Cerrudo
Guest: Karla Gutierrez
Venues: Conservatory The Peninsula Manila (Feb. 11), Sarabia Manor and Convention Center in Iloilo (Feb. 13) and Sugarland Hotel in Bacolod (Feb. 14).

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

We usually have dinner and then watch a show.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you ever experienced?

When Michel Legrand performed at the PICC. We didn't want to be late, so we had KFC takeout in the parking lot.

What's your dream Valentine's date?

Special dinner at home, then drinks until sunrise.

Do you have a fantasy date?

That would be a group date with famous couples from different fields and eras. Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, Juan and Evita Peron, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. My wife and I will complete the "eightsome."

What's the most romantic love song?

"Where Do I Begin?" from the movie "Love Story"—my all-time favorite.

If you were not doing your own show, who would you watch?

Andy Williams, because he'll most probably sing "Where Do I Begin?"

Why should we watch your show?

All my shows have a beneficiary (CRIBS on Feb. 11; the White Cross Children's Home on Feb. 13; St. Scholastica's Bacolod Alumnae Foundation on Feb. 14). So you will be supporting worthy causes as well. I will be accompanied by the RSVP String Ensemble. I promise to sing songs that people of all ages can relate to—including love themes from the musicals and the movies, standards, classical-pop crossover and light opera.

Bayani San Diego Jr.

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TEATRINO PROMENADE GREENHILLS

FEBRUARY 3,2006	AMOR MITCHMO WITH MITCH VALDEZ	9PM
FEBRUARY 10,2006	BOBBY SOUL	9PM
FEBRUARY 11,2006	SIDE A	9PM
FEBRUARY 13 & 14	JAZZ YOU, JAZZ ME ISABELLA & RICHARD MERCK	9PM

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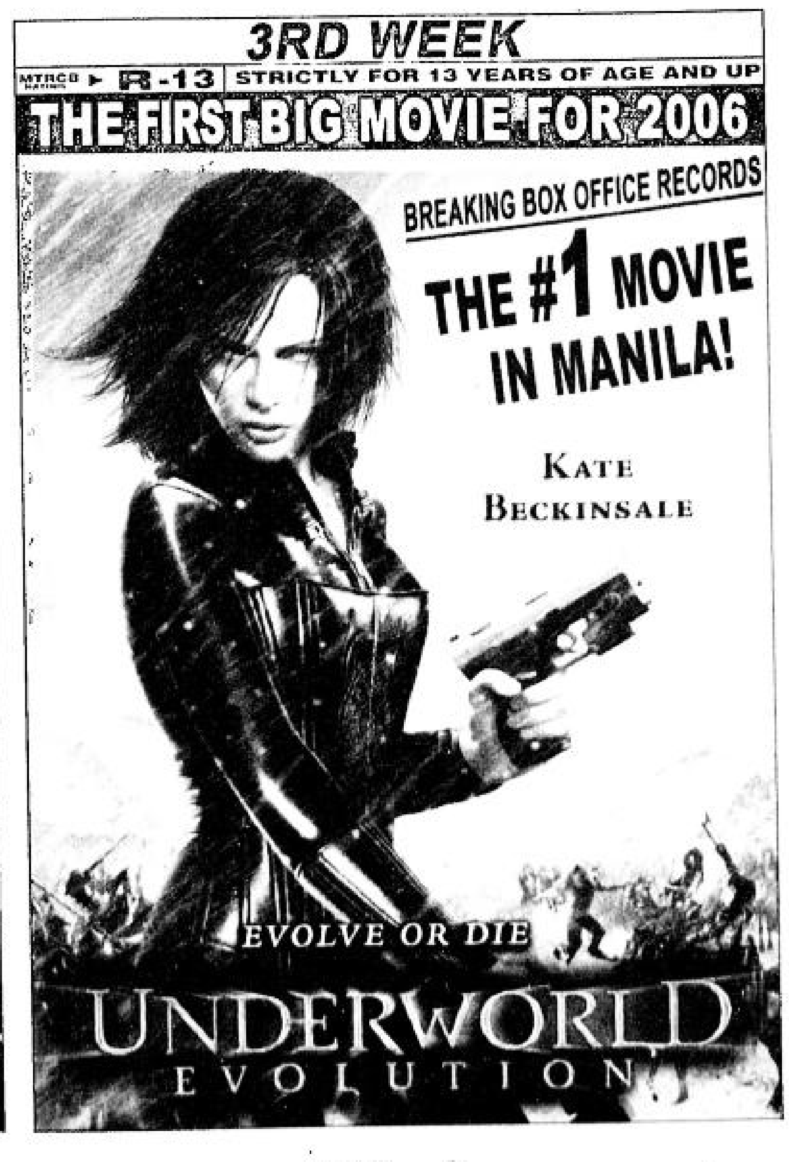

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6 celebrities lik

DOLLYWO

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I WAS INVITED TO JOIN "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition." That surprise call really started my new year with a big bang! I was tempted to say yes but I declined. Some friends volunteered to take my place. My kids prodded me to join. Was I crazy for passing up on this chance of a lifetime? Hmm ... let's just say that there are some things I can't do without for 45 days (make a wild guess). Besides, I'm one person who can't be contained. I can't picture myself being cooped up in one place for a long period of time—not even with a significan other—though I could probably change my mind if **Brad Pitt** were one of the housemates.

I asked some celebrity friends who they wouldn't mind being locked up for PBB. **Sunshine Cruz** chose **Kris Aquino**, saying, "For sure I won't get bored 'cause Kris never runs out of *kwento*."

Assunta de Rossi picked **Rica Peralejo**, **Nikki Valdez** and her sis **Alex**: "Girl power *kami sa loob*!"

Christine Reyes would like her co-"Starstruck" pals **Christian Esteban** and **Jade Lopez** to be with her. "They are my best friends," Christine said. "I wouldn't mind being stuck with them on an island!"

Dina Bonnevie was clueless. "Sorry, I've been too busy with corporate stuff," she said. "I'm not familiar with [PBB]."

(Indeed, after celebrating her birthday at Merks last Friday, Ms D flew to the United States for business matters)

I suddenly wondered who the celebrities in PBB would be. The series starts on Saturday. Had I agreed to join, who would I be under house arrest with?

I snooped around and found out that some of the stars *most likely* to be confined in Big Bro's house are: **Chin Chin Gutierrez, Rustom Padilla, Keanna Reeves, John Pratts, Bianca Gonzalez** and **Rosanna Roces**. What an interesting mix!

CHIN-C

BIANC

(See boxed story below.)

My imagination went wild. Consider this scenario: Chin Chin, known for her unusual ways of com-

Tougher house rules,

By Nini Valera

A SENATE SEX SCANDAL whistle-blower. A one-legged athlete. A single mother. A teenage heartthrob. A former matinee idol. A triple gold medalist in the recent SEA Games. A radio deejay. A fashion model. A fashion designer.

These are just some of the celebrities who have made it to the short list of the celebrity edition of Pinoy Big Brother, which will be launched on Saturday, Feb. 4.

The winning housemate will receive a cool P1-million in cash. The winner will also choose a charity to which another million pesos will be donated, according to Direk Lauren Dyogi, business unit manager.

But as of Tuesday, the final
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has not been d
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Banking on shoc

VIEWFINI

Nestor U. Torre

MAURY POVICH IS TURNING out to be the "C-D" program host on the new Second Avenue cable channel.

His talk-variety show features women who subject men to DNA tests to determine whether they're the fathers of the children they've irresponsibly sired.

This gets a big reaction from C-D viewers, due to the attendant anger, physical and verbal violence, tears, and shock and shlock value.

But it turns out that Povich's show has more hot irons in the fire than we initially thought.

The next time we caught it, he was featuring incredible escapes from danger. Well, that was much less shlocky than the DNA paternity test circus, so OK.

Then, Povich did a limited series on spectacular car crashes. After the sixth stupendous collision, we were wall-eyed from boredom. Don't they know when to stop?

Only after a few more telecasts did we get the major drift of Povich's show: It features unusually people whose similarly extreme experiences are caught on tape.

"Caught on Tape"—that, in fact, is the subtitle for the show's great variety of features.

And, the more unusual, the better.

What about neighbors who beat each other up? Store owners who have to fend off armed robbers? Stars caught without their make-up on and fighting with paparazzi?

The show is open to all sorts of extreme compilations of experiences recorded by home video or even phone cameras, as long as they get a primal surge
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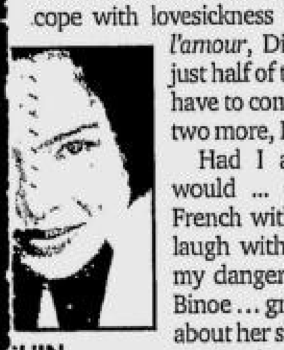
JOHN

KEANNA



CHIN

ROSANNA

RUSTOM

A

muning with nature, will try to talk some sense into the worldly Keanna. The self-confessed "escort girl" will collide with the loquacious Osang. A battle of the boobs and boo-boos is sure to ensue between these sexy mommas. Rustom has long been haunted by rumors that he's gay. Stripped of all inhibitions, will Rustom's stay in the PBB house finally make his true colors, whatever they are, show? For sure, John will be the younger counterpart of PBB's most famous ex-housemate **Sam Milby**. How will Bianca cope with lovesickness while she's away from her *l'amour*, Direk **Lino Cayetano**? That's just half of the story. Six other celebs will have to complete the daring dozen (plus two more, I heard).

Had I accepted the PBB invite, I would ... enjoy brushing up on my French with Chin Chin ... have a good laugh with Rustom reminiscing about my dangerous liaison with his brother Binoe ... grill Keanna for more juicy info about her shady past ... perhaps turn into a "pedophile" and go ga-ga over John (hehe) ... swap girly anecdotes with Bianca ... and try very hard to stay out of Osang's hair. But I'll definitely be evicted right away 'cause I'll be dying to write about the experience and share every gory detail here in Dollywood.

Wonder if *you* would miss my column for a month and a half if I joined Pinoy Big Brother? Please say yes, so I wouldn't regret not joining after all.

Rocksteddy

Band fever heats up once again. The scene promises to be more exciting with the entry of another band—Rocksteddy. The group consists of **Teddy Corpuz** (vocals), **Christian Sandico** (bass), **Jowi Ramos** (guitars/back-up vocals), **Juven Pelingon** (lead guitar) and **Jeff Cucullo** (drums). They have just released their debut album "Tsubtsatagilidakeyn" under 12 Stone Records, distributed by Sony BMG. The album features Tagalog songs on love and relationships, with "Lagi Mo na lang akong Dinededma" as carrier single.

Oro's new star

Make way for **Sheila Mae**. She's Oro Music's first female artist. Her music is pop rock and contemporary. Check out her CD, which consists of 12 original songs including the carrier single "Ibulong." Sheila Mae is set to go on mall tours nationwide. Her album will be distributed in the US and Canada by Oro Records, based in New Jersey.

Personal

Happy birthday to a woman who's beautiful inside out—**Tati Fortuna**! Birthday Cheers to my lovable *kapatid*, **Robert Espinosa**. Birthday hugs to my *palangga*, who's the only one qualified to write my life story—**Ian Reyno**. Birthday greetings to my long lost "guardian angel" **Rissa Carpio** and my "elder sis" whom I miss, **Emma San Juan**

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

challenges and tasks

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elies heavily on created by the lifferences during the period that they are holed up in the now-famous house on Eugenio Lopez Drive.

For this forthcoming batch, that would be at least eight weeks.

Tougher house rules will apply to the celebrity hous emates, Dyogi said. The challenges and tasks will also be harder than those posed on the participants in the first edition. There will also be less food.

Luxury items like cigarettes will cost a fortune. It's going to be a more frugal life for these celebrity housemates, according to Dyogi.

"We are going back to basics," he stressed.

"Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition" will be aired on Channel 2's "Primetime Bida."

k and shlock value

DER

who get a kick out lock.

t shallow, knee- ve and demean- ppears to be par for the program. e is what you it gets.

me we caught (Thursday, Jan. l particularly off- Adolescent girls on getting preg- e vigorous objec- ocked mothers. h sided with the scolded the girls sh and rash. le, however, we ow was devoting the girls' "shock- taunts, so we re- as exploiting the behavior its host gainst. r pious protesta-

unteers

st Asian Founda- and Television is ants for Anak TV s until Feb. 17. ould be based in at least 18 years enior college stu- graduates, free to e country on their , articulate in English or Tagalog, and eager to assist in the foundation's projects related to TV literacy, the promotion of TV users' rights, and the selection of family-friendly programs.

A brief biodata with photo and contact phones can be sent to Anak TV Volunteers, 82 Dr. Lazcano St., Laging Handa, QC. An orientation will be conducted for accepted volunteers prior to posting of assignments.

The volunteers' hours logged can be credited as practicum work or on-the-job training. The exposure enables volunteers to work with TV executives and actors who are part of the foundation's advocacy.

Students and graduates of arts and letters should find the volunteer work stimulating and fulfilling.

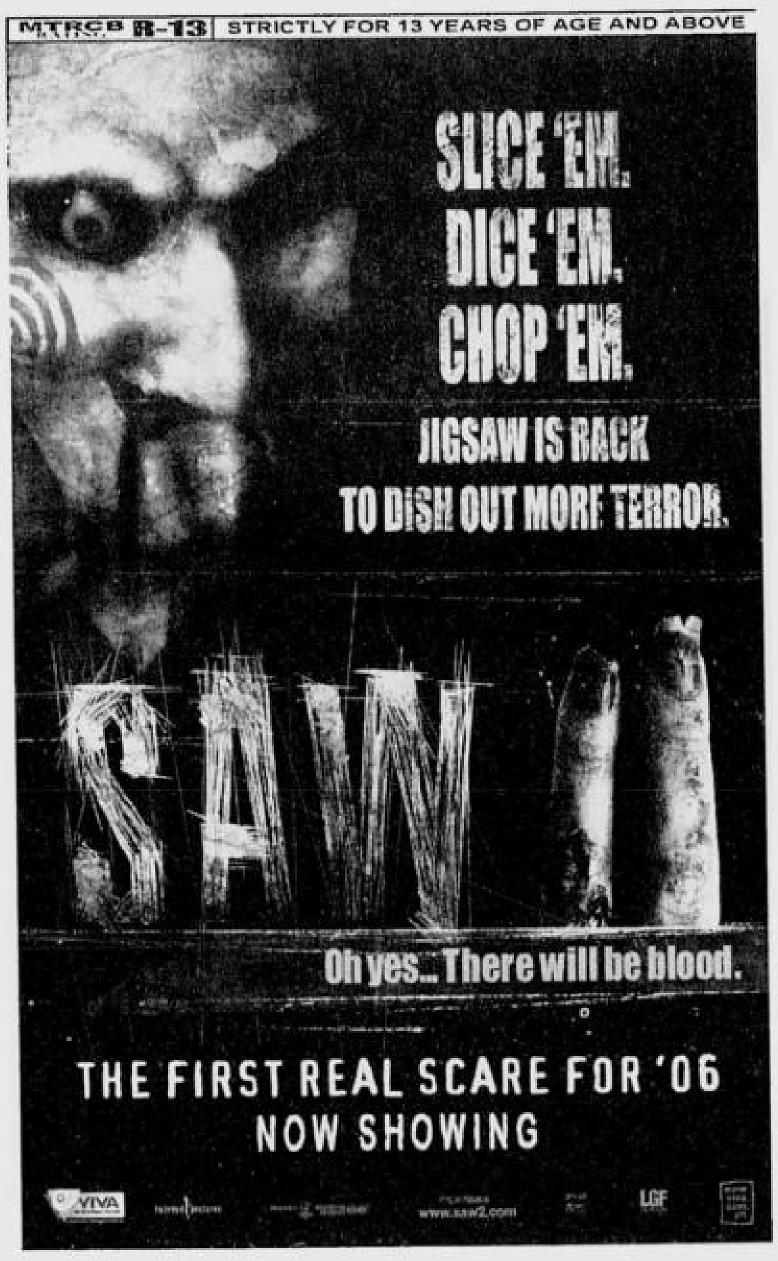
On Cartoon Network

At 3 p.m. on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, catch the network's visuals suspects ham it up in the name of love in "Truly, Madly, Dorky." At 3:30 p.m., one of the girls falls for a guy from the other side of the tracks in "The Powerpuff Girls."

At 4 p.m., Johnny Bravo could find love at last. At 4:30 p.m., "The Ed, Edd N Eddy's Valentine's Day special."

At 5 p.m., "A Scooby-Doo Valentine." At 5:30 p.m., Mac and Boo develop surprising crushes on Frankie in "Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends."

At 6 p.m., "Codename: Kids Next Door" holds a social. Finally, at 6:30 p.m., on "The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy," the two lead characters spend Valentine's Day with a lovelorn Grim.



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THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 WALK THE LINE 12:05FS/12:35MF 03:00 06:05 08:20LFS/09:00LMF/11:15END
2 DERAILED 11:30FS/11:55MF 02:10 04:25/06:40 08:30LFS/09.00LMF/10:50END
MEGAMALL
1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 11:15FS/11:45MF 02:00 03:45LFS 04:15LMF 06:00END
CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 11:20FS/11:30MF 02:00/04:30/07:00/ 09:20LFS/09:30LMF/11:50END
2 UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION 11:20FS/11:30MF 01:30/03:30/05:30/07:30 09:15LFS/09:30LMF/11:15END
3 DERAILED 11:20FS/11:30MF 01:30/03:30/05:30/07:30 09:17LFS/09:30LMF/11:20END
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METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 WALK THE LINE
3 BLOODRAYNE
4 BIG TIME
5 ZATHURA
6 DERAILED
7 SAW 2
8 PROOF
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 UNDERWORLD 2
11 THE MAID
12 NARNIA

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 SAW 2
2 WALK THE LINE
3 BLOODRAYNE
4 DERAILED
5 UNDERWORLD 2
6 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
7 ZATHURA
8 BIG TIME
9 PROOF
10 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 SAW 2
2 DERAILED
3 BLOODRAYNE
4 UNDERWORLD 2

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
1 DERAILED
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 SAW 2
4 THE MAID

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 BLUE MOON
2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
3 NARNIA
4 SAW 2
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 DERAILED
7 UNDERWORLD 2
8 ZATHURA
9 BLOODRAYNE
10 THE MAID
11 KING KONG
12 BIG TIME

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 PROOF
3 DERAILED
4 BLOODRAYNE
5 ZATHURA
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 WALK THE LINE
8 SAW 2
9 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
10 RESERVED

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 SAW 2
3 DERAILED
4 BLOODRAYNE

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 ZATHURA
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 SAW 2
5 BLOODRAYNE
6 PROOF
7 WALK THE LINE
8 DERAILED

SM CITY MANILA
1 BLOODRAYNE
2 DERAILED
3 NARNIA
4 SAW 2
5 ZATHURA
6 UNDERWORLD 2
7 PROOF
8 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 THE MAID
11 BIG TIME
12 WALK THE LINE

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 BLOODRAYNE
2 DERAILED
3 UNDERWORLD 2
4 SAW 2
5 PROOF
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 NARNIA
4 THE MAID
5 HALF LIGHT
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 DERAILED
2 ZATHURA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 RUMOR HAS IT

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO
1 THE MAID
2 ZATHURA
3 DERAILED
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2

SM CITY BACOOR
1 BIG TIME
2 ZATHURA
3 SAW 2
4 HALF LIGHT
5 UNDERWORLD 2
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 DERAILED
8 BLOODRAYNE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 DERAILED
2 THE MAID
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ZATHURA

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 DERAILED
2 ZATHURA
3 RUMOR HAS IT
4 THE MAID

SM CITY LUCENA
1 ZATHURA
2 ST. ANGE
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 ZATHURA
3 DERAILED
4 RUMOR HAS IT

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 NARNIA
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 DERAILED
4 LITTLE MANHATTAN
5 HALF LIGHT
6 THE MAID
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 ZATHURA

SM CITY ILOILO
1 ST. ANGE
2 RESERVED
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ZATHURA
5 RUMOR HAS IT
6 DERAILED
7 RESERVED
8 THE MAN

SM CITY DAVAO
1 DERAILED
2 ST. ANGE
3 ZATHURA
4 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
5 LITTLE MANHATTAN
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 DERAILED
2 FAMILY STONE
3 WHPO'S YOUR DADDY
4 ZATHURA

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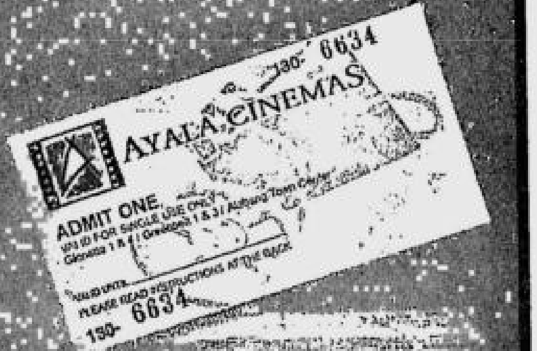
G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 DERAILED	2 SAW 2	3 UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION	4 BLOODRAYNE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 PROOF	2 SAW 2	3 THX DERAILED GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 ZATHURA	5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2	6 WALK THE LINE	7 BLOODRAYNE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 DERAILED	2 WALK THE LINE		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX DERAILED GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX WALK THE LINE GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SAW 2 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 PROOF GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX WALK THE LINE	2 PROOF		
	3 DERAILED	4 BLOODRAYNE	5 SAW 2	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 DERAILED	2 LITTLE MANHATTAN	3 THE MAID	4 HALF LIGHT



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④ DERAILED
⑤ SAW 2

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Activity Center

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1 RUMOR HAS IT • THX
2 ZATHURA
3 WALK THE LINE
4 SAW 2
5 PROOF
6 DERAILED
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 UNDERWORLD 2
9 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
10 BLOODRAYNE

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 DERAILED
2 BLOODRAYNE
3 WALK THE LINE
4 PROOF
5 UNDERWORLD 2
6 SAW 2
7 ZATHURA
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ZATHURA
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
4 PROOF
5 DERAILED
6 SAW 2
7 BLOODRAYNE
8 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 DERAILED
2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
3 SAW 2
4 ZATHURA
5 HALF LIGHT
6 UNDERWORLD 2
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 KUTOB
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 DERAILED
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 BLOODRAYNE
4 ZATHURA

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Cinema 1 DERAILED
Cinema 2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
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Cinema 4 ZATHURA
Cinema 5 HALF LIGHT
Cinema 6 UNDERWORLD 2
Cinema 7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

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1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 THE MAID
5 MOURNING GIRLS

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1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 RUMOR HAS IT
4 MOURNING GIRLS
5 SAINT ANGE

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1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 RUMOR HAS IT
4 THE MAID
5 LITTLE MANHATTAN

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1 RUMOR HAS IT
2 DERAILED
3 JARHEAD
4 KUTOB

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1 DERAILED
2 ZATHURA
3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
4 SAW 2
5 HALF LIGHT
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

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1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 THE MAID
4 RUMOR HAS IT
5 LITTLE MANHATTAN

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1 ZATHURA
2 DERAILED
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 MOURNING GIRLS
5 JARHEAD
6 THE MAID

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3 RUMOR HAS IT
4 THE MAID
5 JARHEAD
6 SAINT ANGE

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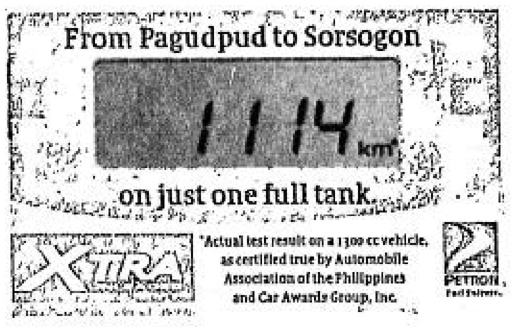
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Peso seen breaching 51:$1 mark

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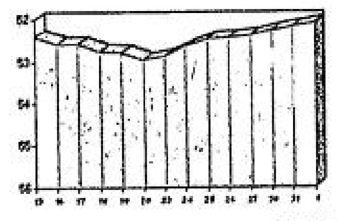

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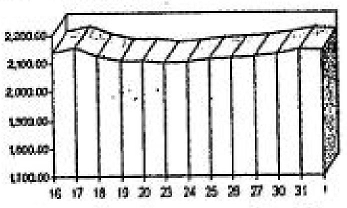
P 52.09 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 1, 2006

¥ 117.34 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 1, 2006

GOLD: **$558.20-558.70**
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 27, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close flat

SHARE PRICES CLOSED FLAT YESTERDAY amid profit-taking on select blue chips, in a performance which mirrored trade elsewhere in the region, dealers said.

They said investors were still digesting an overnight rate hike in the United States, and the possibility that there could be more to come, while the local profit taking was not unexpected in light of recent gains.

Gains in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) and Metrobank, however, helped offset losses elsewhere.

The composite index ended down 1.87 points at 2,143.52 after trading between

SHARES/ B2

Currency rallies to 3-year high of 52.05

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOREIGN BUYING OF LOCAL STOCKS, SOFTENING oil prices and better credit-rating prospects for the country strengthened the peso further to a three-year high of 52.05 before closing at 52.09 to the dollar.

The 52.09:$1 closing rate yesterday was the currency's strongest finish since ending at 52.05 on May 12, 2003.

"There's positive sentiment toward the VAT implementation and corporate demand for dollars is thin," said Roland Avante, treasurer at Chinatrust Commercial Bank Phillipines.

The peso opened at 52.10 and hit an intra-day low of 52.125 before closing. Value traded stood at $448 million at the Philippine Dealing System. After several roadblocks, the government increased the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent starting Feb. 1 as part of the VAT reform program, the single fiscal measure needed to shore up the government's budget position. The first phase of the reform program was fleshed out last year with the repeal of certain exemptions.

The currency was likewise supported by prospective inflows for the P8.5-billion initial public offering of First Generation Holdings.

Avante said another favorable factor working for the local currency was the easing of oil prices.

"At a price of $67-68 a barrel, oil companies need to source

PESO/ B4

ALI HOMESTARTER BOND LAUNCHED
Ayala Land Inc. president Jim Ayala (third from left) confers with ALI treasurer Augusto Bengzon (leftmost), BPI Capital Corp. president Natividad Alejo, and ALI senior vice president for corporate sales and marketing Rex Mendoza during the recent launch of Homestarter Bond. An ALI pioneering initiative, the bond is aimed at helping prospective homeowners build up funds for down payment of homes offered by the company and its subsidiaries, Community Innovations and Avida. BPI Capital Corp. is the designated issue manager of the Homestarter Bond that involves investments of P5,000 to P25,000 for three years with a 5-percent non-compounding interest a year. Offer period ends on Feb. 14.

Lopez firm teams up with Marubeni on power ventures

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LOPEZ FAMILY'S FIRST GEN CORP. has signed a memorandum of understanding with Marubeni Corp. on the possibility of forming a joint-venture firm that will acquire non-gas power generation assets.

Under the MOU, the two parties will discuss the possibility of establishing an entity that will purchase non-gas power facilities that the state-owned National Power Corp., Philippine National Oil Co. and PNOC Energy Development Corp. will be placing on the auction block.

The joint venture will also look into the acquisition of certain privately owned power generation facilities.

According to First Gen's prospectus for its initial public offering, these non-gas power facilities will supply electricity to malls, hospitals, hotels and industrial estates.

Aside from its 1,000-megawatt (MW) Sta. Rita and 500-MW San Lorenzo natural gas-fired power facilities in Batangas, the company is also involved in renewable energy through First Gen Renewables Inc.

FGRI is currently evaluating four potential sites in Mindanao for the construction of run-of-river mini-hydro power plants.

These projects are estimated to deliver a combined capacity of 25 MW.

The firm likewise plans to conduct wind power resource assessments in four potential wind sites in Luzon and the Visayas. These assessments may be done on its own or in cooperation with nongovernment organizations, developers or equipment manufacturers.

Aside from the acquisition of non-gas power assets and the development of more renewable energy resources, First Gen is also exploring the possibility of entering other energy-related fields, particularly the fuel logistics business.

This will involve the development and construction of liquefied natural gas import terminals, petroleum tanker chartering, and oil pipeline management.

The firm is supervising the operations of affiliate First Philippine Industrial Corp., which transports the petroleum products of Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc., from Batangas to their Metro Manila depots.

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Air Phils pursues refleeting plan

By Clarissa S. Batino

AIR PHILIPPINES CORP., THE LOW-COST CARrier of Lucio Tan, said it made a profit for the second straight year in 2005 despite declining yields caused by the price war among carriers.

The year 2004 was the first time Air Phils. went back into the black since it started operations.

In 2003, the company booked more than P100 million in losses.

Air Philippines president Edilberto Medina said the airline could have made more money had it completed its plan to replace its fleet with newer models last year.

The program to replace eight Boeing 737s with at least seven newer aircraft of the same type was scheduled for completion last year. So far, Air Philippines had only acquired six Boeing 737s under lease and was scouting for one more plane.

The airline company that the Tan group took over from businessman William Gatchalian, celebrated its 10th year yesterday.

Medina declined, however, to say exactly how much the company made in profit last year.

He also said the Civil Aeronautics Board recently endorsed the company's application to fly regularly to South Korea.

Air Phils. currently flies to three destinations, three times a week, on charter flights.

The CAB said it had forwarded Air Philippines' request to Malacañang.

Aside from South Korea, the low-cost carrier also flies weekly to Guangzhou in China.

Locally, Medina said that starting March 7, Air Phils. would start flying three times a week to Legaspi City from Cebu.

The airline flies regularly to Tuguegarao, Dumaguete, Legaspi, Palawan, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga, General Santos and Davao from Manila.

From Cebu, Air Philippines flies to Zamboanga, Puerto Princesa, Bacolod, Iloilo, Davao, Zamboanga and General Santos.

Air Phils. was given a designation in 2004 to fly to the United States, Singapore, China and Japan.

The airline, however, said it would rather fly to South Korea and Malaysia.

Medina said Air Phils. may continue acquiring more aircraft depending on the growth of the local market.

Meanwhile, Medina said the price war in the industry could be harmful in the long run as it could affect the viability of the carriers, which he pointed out, had started to compete with shipping firms in terms of pricing.

"We have no choice but to follow, but the price war is not healthy for the industry," he said. "Fare among airlines is already encroaching into the price of shipping fares."

Air Phils. gains followed the airline's improved efficiency as a result of the fleet upgrading that started in 2003.

The low-cost carrier competing head-on with Gokongwei-owned Cebu Air Pacific aimed to improve operating efficiency with newer airplanes that would allow it to establish new routes for domestic and charter operations.

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(As of Feb. 1, 2006)

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BANKS					
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Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36.5	36.5	36	36.5	57,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59	58	58	1,414,400
China Banking Corp.	605	610	605	610	1,670
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	64	64	63	63	96,400
International Exch. Bank	20.5	20.75	20.5	20.75	6,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	29	31	29	31	2,303,000
Philippine National Bank	32	32.5	32	32.5	1,300
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	15,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	34.5	35	34.5	35	348,900
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Abacus Financial	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	25	25.5	25	25.5	6,500
Manulife Financial Corp.	3110	3110	3110	3110	430
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	49,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	145	145	145	145	100
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2125	2150	2125	2150	1,940
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	2,870,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49	49	48	49	260,900
Manila Electric Co. A	14	14	13.75	14	16,700
Manila Electric Co. B	22.75	22.75	21.5	21.5	685,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.4	1,714,000
Petron Corp.	4.8	4.8	4.65	4.65	8,033,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.23	0.25	0.23	0.25	120,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1	1	1	1	180,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	6,000
Cadp Group Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	5,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	12,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	23.5	23.25	23.5	81,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	38	38.5	37.5	37.5	872,200
RFM Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.71	0.71	420,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.74	1.76	323,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	190,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	63	62.5	63	105,000
San Miguel Corp. B	87	87	86	86	49,300
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	42,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	700,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.35	720,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.18	1.18	4,150,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	10,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.45	4.25	4.35	4,583,000
CHEMICALS					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	15,000
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	2,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	10,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	1,000,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.0775	0.0775	2,300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	40,000,000
Ayala Corp.	337.5	342.5	335	335	116,560
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.52	1,050,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.85	4.85	4.75	4.75	1,851,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	1,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	11,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.24	2.2	2.24	1,223,000
APC Group Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	800,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	2,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.92	0.89	0.9	1,410,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.92	60,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.7	35,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.08	3,432,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	660,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	12,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.24	50,000
JG Summit Holdings Inc.	4.5	4.6	4.45	4.55	644,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,600,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	3,040,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	60,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	2,500,000
SM Investments Corp.	238	238	234	235	70,490
South China Resources Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.88	0.88	130,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.0775	0.0775	0.0675	0.0675	12,000,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.135	0.12	0.135	150,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.5	11	10.5	11	6,137,300
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.36	230,000
Belle Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	1,618,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	1,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.205	0.19	0.2	2,730,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.54	1.6	1.52	1.54	3,877,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	45,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.22	4,810,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	1,110,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	12,760,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	820,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.52	1.54	1.52	1.52	3,698,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	600,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	600,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.48	1.54	1.48	1.54	19,814,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	11,360,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6	6	6	6	71,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.145	0.145	0.14	0.14	880,000
SM Development Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	70,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.9	4,266,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.14	0.145	0.135	0.135	11,820,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.25	12.5	12.25	12.25	128,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	180,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	760	760	755	760	34,430
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.3	3.35	3.3	3.35	1,108,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1860	1870	1860	1865	58,770
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.185	0.185	5,810,000
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	52,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.055	0.055	5,200,000
Philweb Corp.	0.038	0.039	0.033	0.034	3,752,900,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	32,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sy	12	12.5	12	12	438,400
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.24	1.24	514,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	213,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	300,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	85,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.28	0.35	0.28	0.33	10,020,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	8.9	8.9	8.8	8.8	21,000
Far Eastern University	580	580	580	580	3,790
Ipeople Inc.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.2	283,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.32	1.32	15,000
Paxys Inc.	8	8	7.8	7.9	347,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.12	1.14	1.06	1.1	1,198,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.52	1.52	1.44	1.48	624,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	52,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.9	6.3	5.9	6.2	1,449,000
Benguet Corp. A	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	12,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	84,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.22	2,980,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27	5,550,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	2,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	7,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.006	716,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.4	1.54	1.4	1.5	72,139,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.2	2.2	2.16	2.2	4,174,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26.5	26.5	25.5	26	213,500
Vulcan Ind'l	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.38	380,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.205	0.21	0.205	0.21	1,500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	197,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0095	0.0095	0.0085	0.0085	191,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.46	900,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	70,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	4.35	4.35	4.25	4.25	100,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.25	12.25	12	12	148,600

CURRENCIES

February 1, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.822639	1.000000	52.1670
Japan	Yen	0.007015	0.008528	0.4449
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462817	1.778200	92.7634
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106051	0.128916	6.7252
Switzerland	Franc	0.643693	0.782473	40.8193
Canada	Dollar	0.722310	0.878040	45.8047
Singapore	Dollar	0.507270	0.616637	32.1681
Australia	Dollar	0.622221	0.756372	39.4577
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.182646	2.653224	138.4107
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.219376	0.266674	13.9116
Brunei	Dollar	0.505711	0.614742	32.0692
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000088	0.000107	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021153	0.025714	1.3414
UAE	Dirham	0.223982	0.272272	14.2036
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.215600	63.4142
Argentina	Peso	0.268617	0.326531	17.0341
Brazil	Real	0.371915	0.452100	23.5847
Denmark	Kroner	0.134006	0.162898	8.4979
India	Rupee	0.018713	0.022748	1.1867
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219399	0.266702	13.9130
Mexico	New Peso	0.078770	0.095753	4.9951
New Zealand	Dollar	0.562757	0.684088	35.6868
South Africa	Rand	0.135247	0.164406	8.5766
Korea	Won	0.000853	0.001037	0.0541
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025760	0.031314	1.6336

Shares close flat

From page B1

2,136.13 and 2,149.81. Volume reached 5.24 billion shares worth P1 billion. Losers outnumbered gainers 62 to 35, while 45 stocks ended unchanged.

The broader all-shares index advanced 3.98 points to 1,031.11.

"The market has been going up for six days. This is just a healthy correction," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities Inc.

He said investors were looking for prices to subside before coming back in again ahead of more corporate earnings due out this month.

A two percentage point increase in the value-added tax, which took effect yesterday, has already been discounted by the market in its recent rally, some dealers noted. AFP

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To Mr. Lito Tengco, All The Best On Your Birthday!

Singapore firm gets perks

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS HAS granted incentives to a Singaporean firm's P118.5-million project to make, buy and sell in the country a new generation of parts for cars, buses, trucks and motorcycles.

Data from the BOI showed that Philippine Auto Components Inc., 97.3 Singaporean and 2.7 percent Japanese-owned, will operate in Carmelray Industrial Park in Laguna a facility that can produce 400,000 sets of instruments and 350,00 units of parts a year.

Among the products that PACI will make are radiators, fuel pumps, and instrument clusters made of various kinds of meters and gauges, like speedometers and tachometers, as well as fuel and temperature gauges.

The firm will also put up a new production line to manufacture instrument clusters and related parts, like dials, printed circuit boards and cases for motor vehicles.

PACI's project will create 126 new jobs, and all products are geared for the export market.

In a related development, Subic economic zone top exporter Wistron Infocomm (Philippines Corp.) was granted tax and other incentives for an expansion project.

A BOI document showed that the company based in Taiwan was laying out about P43.4 million to establish centers of excellence as well as facilities for testing and servicing electronic products.

The centers will provide training for upgrading workers' skills, while the facilities will provide services like repairing and upgrading defective electronic products.

Wistron's latest investment at the Subic Bay Industrial Park in Zambales will generate 158 new jobs.

A local unit of Wistron Corp., the company is engaged in the manufacture of motherboards and laptop computer units, as well as computer peripherals and fax machines.

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(For Customer Service Representative applicants, please look for Lynn Marcelo)

Peso seen . . .

From page B1

about $100 million from the spot market in a month. At only $65/barrel, this will go down to $60-$70 million, a demand that can easily be absorbed by the market," Avante said.

But while the momentum was positive and the peso was now heading toward the 51:$1, Avante said the lower peso-dollar exchange rate was creating demand.

"We haven't seen the peso at low 52 levels for a long time, so those who are not so optimistic are now hunting for bargains. They are buying dollars at these levels," Avante said.

On the other hand, analysts expect equities to outperform fixed-income securities this year, which means that the local currency's appreciation would depend more on equity flows.

"The US treasuries are declining in price but our comparative benchmark is not moving so the spread is declining," Avante said, noting why local debt paper would likely become less attractive.

Analysts from ING agreed that the double-digit returns on peso bonds seen last year would not be possible to replicate this year.

Paul Joseph Garcia, ING Philippines chief investment officer, said peso bonds would likely yield only 8-10 percent net after tax while local equities could top last year's return of 15 percent.

"This year, we're looking at 15-20 percent (return rate for the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index). Our view on valuation is still cheap," Garcia said.

Meanwhile, Avante said the market would be very disappointed if the Philippines would not get an upgrade in its credit-rating outlook from major rating agencies. He said most investors had priced an improvement in the ratings and that a change in the outlook from "negative" to "stable" might not be enough.

Favor of the month

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

TODAY IS THE DEADLINE ON THE OFFER made by retail giant Henry Sy's SM group to the stockholders of Equitable PCI Bank, which they should just refuse—without thinking.

Supposedly, the offer involves a merger between the SM group-controlled Banco de Oro (ninth largest) and Equitable PCI Bank (third biggest).

But the term "merger" is the sterilized version. Actually, the SM group wants BDO to gobble up Equitable PCI—without the group spending a centavo.

No wonder, even with the intimidating deadline for the lopsided offer, the SM group still has to muster the support of other stockholders.

* * *

All of a sudden, reports burned the news wires last week that the SM group was, er, "extending" the deadline.

Two groups in the majority bloc in Equitable PCI—the pension fund GSIS and Trans Middle East—pooh-poohed that odious offer from the start.

Only the pension fund SSS, through its boss Corazon dela Paz, indicated to media that it would think about the offer. And what was there to think about—how to bilk the 18 million or so SSS members, whose P20 billion worth of blood, sweat and tears are rotting in Equitable PCI?

* * *

IF YOU were Dela Paz, the first thing you'd ask yourself is, will the SM group offer be good for the SSS members?

The answer is simple. It is out-and-out shameless.

Whadayano, reports now say that the SSS already favors the merger. Oh yeah, in return for what kind of, er, "favor."

I mean, really, somebody in public office can be that brazen, huh.

Together, you see, the government-run GSIS and SSS now control about 43 percent of Equitable PCI. This can command a handsome premium when they unload their investments in the bank for cash. Again—that's hard CASH!

And guess what the pension funds, particularly SSS, need most nowadays. Under Dela Paz, the SSS never increased the benefits of its members, who, by the way, mostly belong to the working class.

* * *

UNDER the "merger," which is actually a "takeover" in disguise, the SSS and the GSIS will be locked in, perhaps for good.

Our pension funds then will get BDO stocks. Thus, we still have some pieces of paper.

Believe me, nobody in his right mind will want to buy the BDO stocks from the SSS and the GSIS.

For one, the "takeover" will dilute the holdings of the SSS and the GSIS from the present 43 percent (in Equitable PCI) to just about 20 to 22 percent (in BDO).

* * *

ANOTHER infuriating issue is the pricing.

The SM group offer means that the holdings of SSS and GSIS in Equitable PCI are valued at less than P60 a share.

In comparison, GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia has a foreign buyer at P92 a share.

All of a sudden, after Garcia made some noise about the "takeover" (or the "merger"), and reports came out about possible hanky-panky in the deal, the SM group now peddles a PR line that the "pricing" is still negotiable.

If that's the case, why didn't the group just put forward the best offer it could make from the start?

Is it because of rumors that the SM group already procured the help of somebody big in the Palace, say, during that recent trip to Hong Kong?

On top of it all, even if the SM group prices the Equitable PCI shares to heaven, all it will give the SSS and the GSIS are still pieces of paper—not CASH.

Why can't the SM group just buy out the GSIS and the SSS with cash?

* * *

AND the beauty of it all is, the SSS is in favor of the SM group's proposal.

I don't know if it's because Dela Paz has been out of the country most of the time so much so that she probably wants to keep her job. What price must she pay? Is it to deliver Equitable PCI to the SM group at the expense of 18 million SSS members?

After all, she seems to be getting help from another SSS nominee in the Equitable PCI board named Fulgencio Factoran Jr, who is not even connected with the SSS management. What is he doing representing us, SSS members, in the bank?

They just don't get it, do they? Their job is to protect the interest of the SSS members. Not the interest of SM group!

Paging congressmen and senators, perhaps this calls for an investigation. That's the public's P20 billion these guys are playing with here!

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Piltel Corp. stock certificate no. 131813 for 3000 shares issued to Michael Dave T. Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI-Jan. 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

Notice is hereby given that Fil-Estate Land stock certificate no. 078803 for 10,000 shares and certificate no. 84725 for 1,700 shares issued to Michael Dave T. Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI- Jan 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

Notice is hereby given that Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. Stock Certificate no. 98448 for 200 shares (old par value) and certificate no. 108978) for 40 shares (old par value) issued to Michael Tao Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI-Jan. 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

NOTICE OF DECREASE OF AUTHORIZED CAPITAL OF SYNGENTA PHILIPPINES, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the Amended Articles of Incorporation of Syngenta Philippines, Inc. (the "Corporation"), decreasing the Corporation's authorized capital stock from Five Hundred Million Pesos (P500,000,000.00) to Seventy Two Million Pesos (P72,000,000.00) divided into Seven Million Two Hundred Thousand (7,200,000) shares of stock with a par value of Ten Pesos (P10.00) each, was approved by a majority of the Corporation's Board of Directors and ratified by its stockholders representing at least two-thirds of the outstanding capital stock of the Corporation at meetings held on December 19, 2005 at the Corporation's office at the 8/F Salustiana Dy Tower, 104 Paseo de Roxas, 1226 Makati City.

This announcement serves as a notice to all parties of the Corporation's decrease in authorized capital stock.

Makati City, [February 1, 2006].

By: Deanna D. Aguila
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–Feb. 2, 2006)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that the estate of the late SOLEDAD DE ASPELLERA, JOSE DELPRADO SR, JESUS DELPRADO has been settled by his heirs through final extrajudicial settlement executed by Leticia S. Mariano de Guia Notary Public of Manila under Doc.# 55, Page #12, Book III Dated Jan 19 2006 Manila IBP 638773 01 02 2006 & Doc# 54 Page# 12 Book# III dated Jan. 19 2006 Manila IBP 638773 01 02 2006 (PDI-Jan. 26, Feb. 2 & 9,2006)

Notice is given that the estate of the late Plaridel Banzon Dizon has been extra-judicially settled among his heirs before Notary Public CONCEPCION M. JUATAS of Parañaque City as per doc. No. 490, Page No. 99, Book No. 48 Series of 2006. (PDI Jan. 26, Feb. 2 & 9, 2006)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of Teresita G. Magalona has been extrajudicially settled among her heirs as per Doc. 321, Page No. 66, Book No. 46, Series of 2005 of Notary Public Ruben T.M. Ramirez of Makati City. (PDI-Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 9, 2006)

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the MetroBank savings accounts of the late DIVINA B. PERALTA was self-adjudicated to the sole surviving parent/heir MARIO C. PERALTA as per Doc. No. 288, Page 58, Book 1, Series of 2005 and shall be released thru S.P.A. Jesus B. Peralta as per Doc. No. 287, Page 58 of Book 1, series of 2005.
(PDI–Feb. 2, 9 & 16, 2006)

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OBITUARIES

Thank You

The family of

MANUEL ZACHARY ARANETA ESCUDERO

wish to thank all those who condoled with us in our sorrow. Your presence, prayers, kind words, Mass cards and floral tributes were a comfort to us and the first step towards easing the pain that unfortunately will always be there.

We request everyone to support the campaign against cellphone snatching and the unregulated trade in secondhand cellphones, so that maybe someday in the future no family will have to endure the loss of its loved ones to such a heinous, violent and senseless crime.

" I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me will live........"
John 11:25

In Loving Memory
of our Dearly Beloved

Atty. LUIS J. DEL ROSARIO

of Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija and Colorado, USA

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 26, 2006 at the age of 86 in Lakewood, Colorado, USA.

His beloved wife **Betty**; children and in-laws **Ma. Luisa** and **William**, **Marina** and **Larry**, **Mercedes** and **Whittack**, **Marcia**, **Stephen** and **Rosario**, **Eleno** and **Marilyn**, **Eugenio**, **Eduardo** and **Glenna**; grandchildren and great grandchild; sister **Purificacion**; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Our dearly beloved

JERONIMO TEODORO "TEDDY" W. CORPUS

Joined his Creator
on 29 January 2006 at the age of 39.

His loving mother **Bessie**; children **Tofi** and **CJ**; fiancée **Ina Remedios**; siblings and in-laws **Anna** and **Joey Say**, **Emelyn** and **Adrian Martinez**, **Cenen** and **Kat**, **Victor** and **Che**; nephews and nieces **Kevin** and **Maxine**, **Kite** and **Kiwi**, **Iking** and **Isabela**, **Kabs** and **Ikalu**; and his relatives request for prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel D, Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Q.C. Cremation will be tomorrow, 3 February 2006 at 12:30 p.m.

Final services will be held on Saturday, 4 February 2006 at 10 a.m. at the Dela Strada Church, Katipunan Avenue, Q.C.

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Fortune Star Construction & Development Corporation deeply mourn the passing of the Father of our President.

BENJAMIN TAN CU SENG

Who passed away on the 28th day of January 2006 at the age of 80.

His remains lie in state at the Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Please join us in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTORS GENERAL OF THE 33RD AND LAST DEGREE, ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE OF FREEMASONRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

deeply mourn the passing of

ILL. REYNOLD S. FAJARDO, 33°

Grand Treasurer General, H.E.

who died on January 27, 2006, at the age of 73. His remains lie in state at Chapel 3C Funeraria National, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City and will be transferred to the Grand Lodge of the Phils., Plaridel Masonic Temple today, February 02, 2006.

The 18th Degree Funeral Rites will be performed by The Supreme Council at 7:00 P.M., February 03, 2006 followed by 3rd Degree Funeral Rites by the MW Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of the Phils.

Interment will be on February 04, 2006 at 11:00 A.M. at Eternal Garden, Caloocan City.

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Laureana Valerio vda. de Pasamanero

✲ July 4, 1927 † January 29, 2006

Her body lies at Don Bosco Chapels, Makati.
Interment on February 4, 2006
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at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

OBITUARIES

Agnes Borja Cabalquinto

was called home to the Lord on Monday, 30 January, 2006.

Her family and friends request the readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Ascension of Our Lord Parish Mortuary, Barangay Greater Lagro, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Cremation will be at Paz Crematory on Saturday, February 4, 2006 after the 8:30 a.m. Mass at Ascension of Our Lord Parish.

Gov't seen reviewing medium-term targets

Factoring in rising oil prices, other developments

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT REVIEW ITS macro-economic targets under the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) to see if they were still realistic given the below-the-target gross domestic product growth last year, the country's chief economist said.

The economy, measured in terms of GDP, last year grew by only 5.1 percent, or off the MTPDP target of between 5.3 and 6.3 percent.

Economic authorities blamed the sharp rise in global oil prices and the El Niño weather problem, which cut agricultural production, for the country's failure to meet the growth target.

"We may have to study the MTPDP targets by mid-2007 to factor in current developments," said Augusto Santos, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

MTPDP is the blueprint of the national government's development agenda for 2005 to 2010, outlining macro-economic targets and programs.

The GDP growth targets under the MTPDP are as follow: 5.3 to 6.3 percent in 2005; 6.3 to 7.3 percent in 2006; 6.5 to 7.5 percent in 2007; 6.8 to 7.8 percent in 2008, and 7 to 8 percent in 2009 and 2010.

Observers said the MTPDP targets seemed optimistic. The Asian Development Bank, for instance, had projected that the Philippines' economic growth would likely be about 5 percent from 2005 to 2007.

The target of between 5.3 and 6.3 percent for 2005 was based on the assumption of a robust farm output growth and a vibrant services sector, to be boosted by the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry.

The country also missed the export growth target set under the MTPDP for 2005.

The National Statistical Coordination Board earlier reported that the country's merchandise exports grew by a measly 2.3 percent last year, way off the 10-percent goal set under the MTPDP.

The weak performance of the export sector was blamed largely on the decline in the global demand for electronics, which accounted for about 70 percent of the country's total exports. Economists said the poor demand for electronics was due to high oil prices which forced consumers to cut down on spending for items that were not considered basic.

The MTPDP set the country's annual export growth targets as follow: 10 percent for 2005 and 2006; 11 percent for 2007; 12 percent for 2008; 14 percent for 2009, and 13 percent for 2010.

Despite the country's failure to meet the export growth target of 10 percent last year, the Neda said the government was keeping for now the 10-percent growth target for 2006 until the review of the MTPDP goals next year.

Because of the volatility of demand for electronics, the Neda said it was pushing for the diversification of the country's exports. In line with this, Santos said the government had identified 10 key industries that would be the focus of government support programs this year. The industries are agribusiness, health and wellness, information and communications technology, electronics, motor vehicles, energy, infrastructure, tourism, shipping/shipbuilding, and jewelry and fashion.

Support programs will include easy access to financing and trade promotions to be organized by the Department of Trade and Industry, Santos said.

Semiconductor firm expanding operations

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL UNIT OF A NASdaq-listed semiconductor company is spending $50 million or about P2.6 billion to relocate its factory from Parañaque City to the Carmelray Park II economic zone in Laguna.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said AMI Semiconductor Philippines Inc. was spending $20 million for a 15-year lease agreement with ecozone developer ILO Land Inc. and $30 million for a new sorting and testing plant.

Favila said the investment was in line with the move of AMIS' Idaho-based parent firm to consolidate its worldwide sort and test operations. Under the plan, some of the capacity in the US and Belgium will be transferred to the Philippine facility.

With the expansion, AMIS Philippines' business is expected to increase to $220 million yearly from $175 million.

The value of inputs from within the country, including materials and labor, would go up by 20 percent to an average of P100 million yearly.

AMIS, according to the DTI, is a leader in the designing and manufacturing of a broad range of integrated mixed-signal products, which are used largely by the automotive industry.

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BSP sees no need to raise key policy rates

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas sees no need to match the fresh 25-basis point hike in the US key overnight rate yesterday.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the US Federal Reserve's action yesterday did not come as a surprise.

"Given the projected easing of the inflation in the second half of this year, the slowdown in domestic liquidity growth and the positive performance of the peso, there seems to be no compelling reason to match the Fed move at this time," Tetangco said.

The global financial markets had expected the 25 basis-point hike in the US Fed rate to 4.5 percent.

American Express Bank economist Kevin Grice, in a commentary sent to the INQUIRER, said the Fed would likely raise its key rate again to 4.75 percent at its March Federal Open Market Committee meeting but it was expected to keep this rate until late 2006.

Tetangco yesterday announced a slowdown in the growth of domestic liquidity for the fourth straight month in December.

Domestic liquidity grew by 9.6 percent year-on-year in December to P2.32 trillion. The growth rate was slower than the 11.9 percent annual increase recorded in the previous month.

Domestic liquidity or m3 measures money supply—including money in circulation, demand deposits, money market funds and short-term repurchase agreements.

On a month-on-month basis, m3 expanded by almost 2.3 percent, higher than the 1.0 percent growth in the previous month.

Growth in liquidity continues to be driven by strong inflows of foreign exchange remittances from overseas Filipino workers, as well as portfolio and direct investments, Tetangco said.

"The deceleration in liquidity growth may be traced mainly to lower net credits to the public sector as a result of the improved fiscal performance," Tetangco said.

He pointed out that net lending to the national government declined by 9.8 percent in December following the significant build-up of national government deposits.

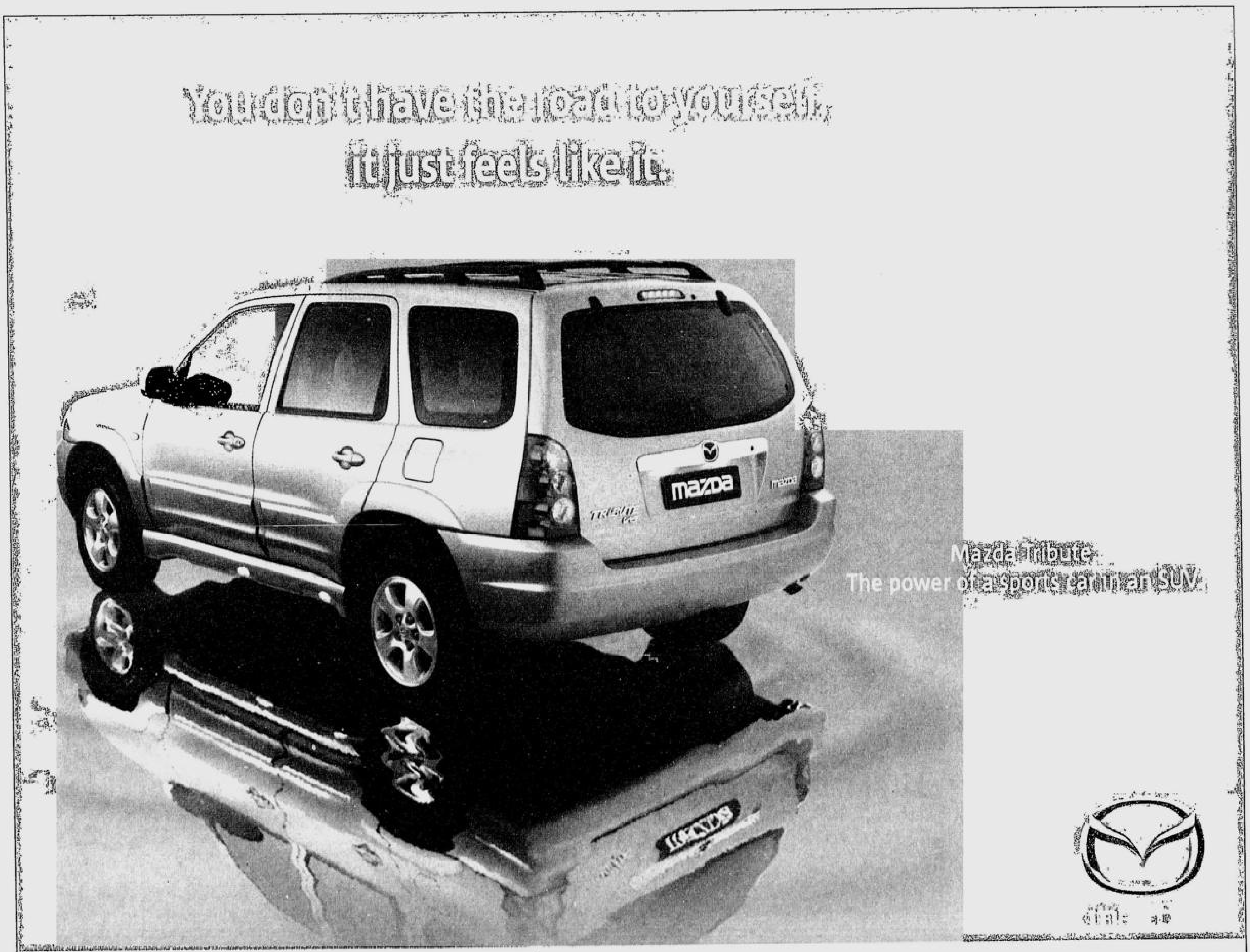
"The BSP will continue to monitor the level of domestic liquidity to ensure that it remains consistent with our price stability objective. At the same time, the BSP will continue to pursue its efforts to strengthen the banking system in order to ensure that credit activity proceeds in line with real sector activity," Tetangco said.

Local monetary authorities expect the country's inflation rate for the full year to range between 7.5 and 8.1 percent, peaking in the first semester.

They said that even the 4-5 percent revised inflation target for 2007 could be slightly breached if inflationary pressures persisted.

For this year, global energy prices remained the main source of uncertainty in the outlook for inflation given the limited global oil production capacity.

Also, price adjustments arising from the recent increase in the value-added tax to 12 percent from 10 percent are also expected to exert pressure on consumer prices in the short term.



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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS ◎ TUESDAY FITNESS ◎ WEDNESDAY 2BU ● THURSDAY

Soft, silky 'taho' delivered

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

IN THE REAL WORLD, IT IS quite a struggle for people to prepare everything from soup to nuts, and to order food is sometimes a welcome thought, especially when it comes to dessert. Even for people like us who live in the kitchen, ordering food from time to time is a blissful exercise.

It was one of those days when my students were talking about where to order the best of the best. Judith Tiu mentioned her *taho* man and how impeccable his *taho* was.

The next day I had to cook for my sister Vicky's *despedida*. Apart from it being a terribly hectic day for me, since I was doing a twisted Pinoy menu, the thought of having *taho* on my dessert buffet was tempting.

So, order I did! A barrel each of almond and *pandan*. It was delivered to my doorstep, complete with *sago*, syrup, and even those blast-from-the-past *taho* ladles of my childhood.

I chased after Stanley Lim of Tofurrific, the *taho* man himself, to ask what made his curd so soft, light and silky. I just had to know.

According to him, "Aside from choosing the beans very well, we use steam and pressure to cook the soy beans, contributing to the flavor of our *taho*, making it more yummy. [This is unlike] the conventional way of cooking that uses the *kawa* with *panggatong*, continuously stirring while cooking, otherwise, *mangangamoy sunog*. The temperature from the *panggatong* is not controlled, making it quite difficult to come out with consistent end-products. We do not use this method in cooking our *taho*."

A lot of people make *taho* these days but excellent *taho* comes few and far between. Lim concentrates on *taho* by the barrel, selling them in three sizes—small, at P250, serves 10 to 12; medium, at P500, for 20-25; and large, at P800, for 50-55.

With prices like that, how can you go wrong? Lim's *taho* is delivered to your doorstep and comes in original, almond, *pandan*, *ube*, *langka*, strawberry and even chocolate flavors. The *ube* is excellent. Call 0917-8910886 or 3638750. If you are presentation-conscious, please specify wooden buckets when you order.

Easy liver recipe

Do you have an easy chicken liver pâté/terrine recipe?

PINKY

Sure do! The consistency of this one is really more like a mousse's. It's delicious. Use pale yellow livers. They are milder and richer compared to the real red ones which tend to be bitter.

Before the recipe, here are some pâté facts. "Pâté" and "terrine" are often misused, one mistaken for the other and vice versa. Today, however, it is socially acceptable to do so. Nonetheless, the following is good "just to know" material.

Pâté—[pah-TAY, pa-TAY]—French for "pie," this word—with accent over the "e"—is generally used to refer to various elegant, well-seasoned ground-meat preparations. A pâté can be satiny-smooth and spreadable or, like country pâté, coarsely textured. It can be made from a finely ground or chunky mixture of meats (such as pork, veal, liver or ham), fish, poultry, game, vegetables, etc. Seasonings and fat are usually also included in the mixture, which can be combined before or after cooking. Pâtés may be cooked in a crust, in which case they're referred to as pâté en croûte. They may also be cooked in a pork fat-lined container called a terrine (or any other similarly sized mold), in which case they're called pâté en terrine. In traditional parlance, when such a mixture is cooked and served in a terrine, the dish is also called a terrine. When unmolded, it becomes a pâté. Today, however, the two terms are often used interchangeably. Pâtés may be hot or cold and are usually served as a first course or appetizer. (Source: Food Lover's Companion, S.T. Herbst)

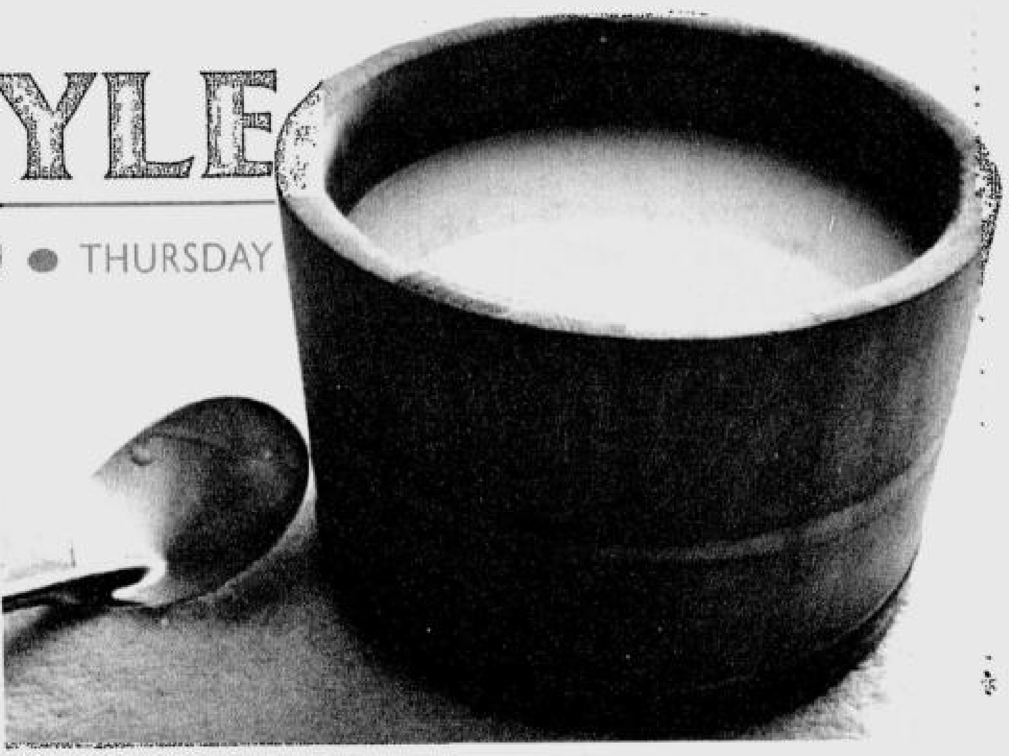
Chicken Liver Pâté

½ kilo well-cleaned chicken livers
1 c onions
1 tsp garlic
1 bay leaf
1 tsp fresh thyme
½ tsp fresh marjoram, optional
½ tsp fresh sage, optional
1 c water
salt and pepper to taste
1 ½ c butter, cold and cubed
1 tbsp cognac, whisky or bourbon

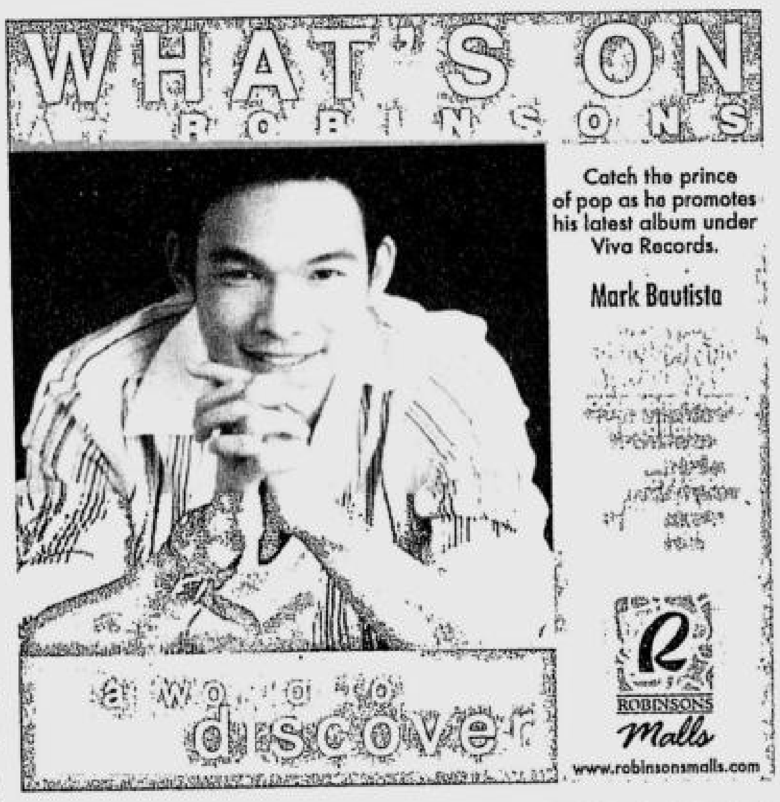
- Combine ingredients except salt, pepper, butter and cognac in a saucepan and let chicken livers cook. Approximately 6-8 minutes
- Remove bay leaf and strain liver
- Put livers in a food processor and process until smooth
- Set mixture aside to cool in the ref for an hour
- Put the mixture back in the food processor and add butter a little at a time, continue to process until the livers are whipped and of mousse-like consistency.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper
- Add liquor
- Transfer mixture to a terrine mold
- Top with a thin layer of ghee/clarified butter, approximately 1/3 cup. Ghee can be bought at Indian stores, or make your own clarified butter.
- Cover and chill for 10-12 hours.
- Serve with crackers.

Last week's caption for the steak photo should have read, "Meltique Steaks taste as good as they look." My apologies.

For comments or suggestions e-mail raspiras@inquirer.com.ph



TAHO in a barrel from Tofurrific



WHAT'S ON ROBINSONS

Catch the prince of pop as he promotes his latest album under Viva Records.

Mark Bautista

a world to discover

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The Maya Kitchen
CULINARY ARTS CENTER

Chocolate Class and more...

Maya Kitchen will show you how to cook your way to a healthier heart & healthier relationships. Featured this month of love are chocolatey sweet recipes that you can make for your family and friends, plus low cholesterol dishes that are good for the heart and healthy life. Check the schedule below and enroll now!

Chocolate Workshop: Feb. 4 (Sat.) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Chocolate Mousse, Cheese cake, Chocolate chip cookies, Almond roca, Assorted chocolate coated candies & truffles. P900.

Brownie Plus Baking from prepared mixes: Feb. 4 (Sat) 3 - 6 p.m. Black Forest Brownies, Apple Chunk, Rocky Road, Butterscotch squares, chocolate crinkles with costing. P600.

Low Calorie & High Fiber Meals: Feb. 11 (Sat) 9 - 2 p.m. Puree of onion leek & celery soup, Grilled chicken w/ salsa sauce, pork & lettuce rolls, crispy baked fish, tofu stroganoff, mango sorbet w/ lecture on how to calculate calorie requirements, tips on calorie cooking. P900.

Guilt Free Desserts: Feb. 11 (Sat.) 3 -6 p.m. Peach Coblers, Mandarin Orange Brulee, Fruit & Spice Bread Pudding, Apple Walnut Crumble, Lemon heart w/ strawberry sauce. P600.

Rice Toppings: Feb. 25 (Sat.) 9 a.m. -1 p.m. Adobo Rice, Garlic Rice, Parsley Rice, Bagoong Rice, Mushroom Gambas, Sweet & Sour Pork in Kasubha Rice including costing & packaging ideas. P800.

CERTIFICATE COURSES WITH HANDS-ON (Limited enrolment, Pre-registration required)

Basic Culinary: Feb. 7 - 10 / Feb. 21 - 24 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of mirepoix, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices combinations, proper purchasing, storage, techniques of disjointing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication. With actual preparation of dishes from appetizer, salad eggs, pasta, seafoods, poultry and meats, dessert including garnishing for plate presentation. Free Mix & Match cookbook. P5,000.

Basic Cake Design: Feb. 11 & 18 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Fundamentals of cake decorating; coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, caramel, chocolate, sugar, icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flowers including bunching techniques, individual workshop on icing application and cake designing. P3,000

Fundamentals of Bakery Production: Feb. 14-17/Feb. 28-Mar. 3 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Standard baking techniques applicable to baking application on the use of ready mixes, yeast bread, quick breads, pies, cookies and cakes. P4,000

Catering & Fastfood Business: Feb. 15 - 17 (W-F) 3 - 6 p.m. Legal & technical aspect to get started in catering business, facilities, personnel, menu including portioning and quantification. Actual cooking preparation of Stuffed Chicken Thighs, Vegetable Samosa, Spicy Chicken Wings, Eggplant Skordalia, Quiche Lorraine. P3,000 with free catering cookbook.

For inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays thru Saturdays) at 8th floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1185 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at *mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph*

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TRAFALGAR Anna 814-0138

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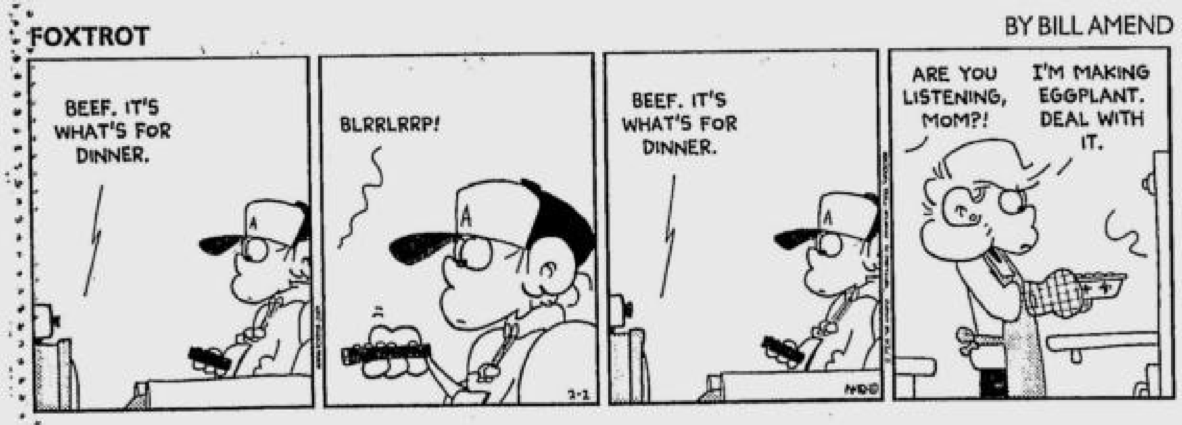
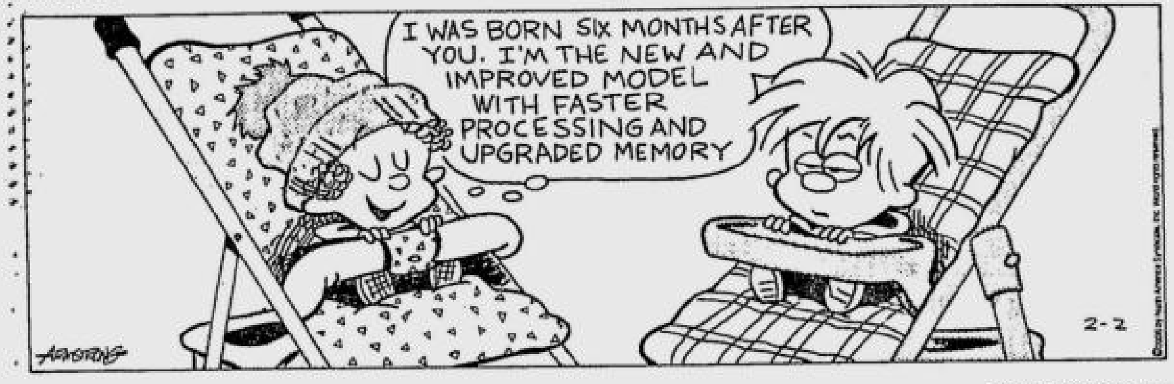
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


BEEF. IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER.
BLRRLRRP!
BEEF. IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER.
ARE YOU LISTENING, MOM?!
I'M MAKING EGGPLANT. DEAL WITH IT.
2-1

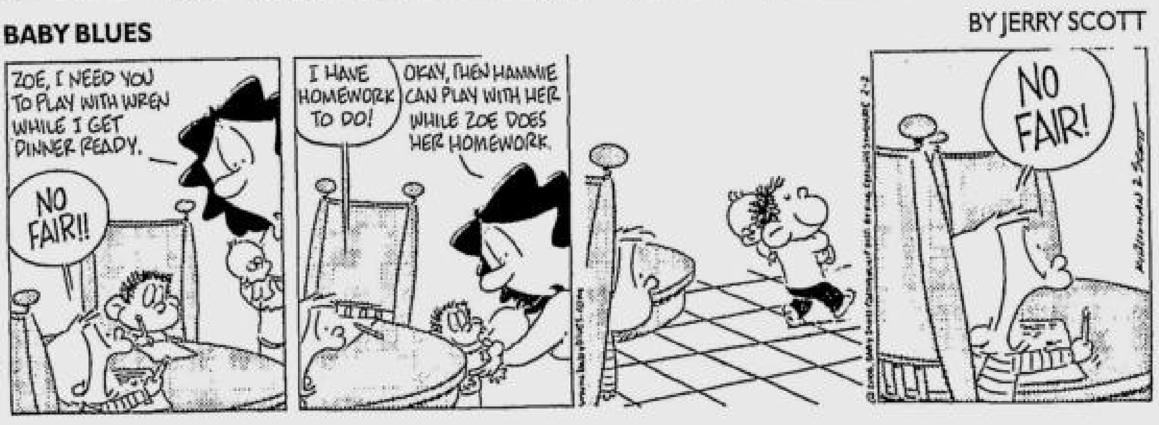
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I WAS BORN SIX MONTHS AFTER YOU. I'M THE NEW AND IMPROVED MODEL WITH FASTER PROCESSING AND UPGRADED MEMORY
ARMSTRONG
2-2

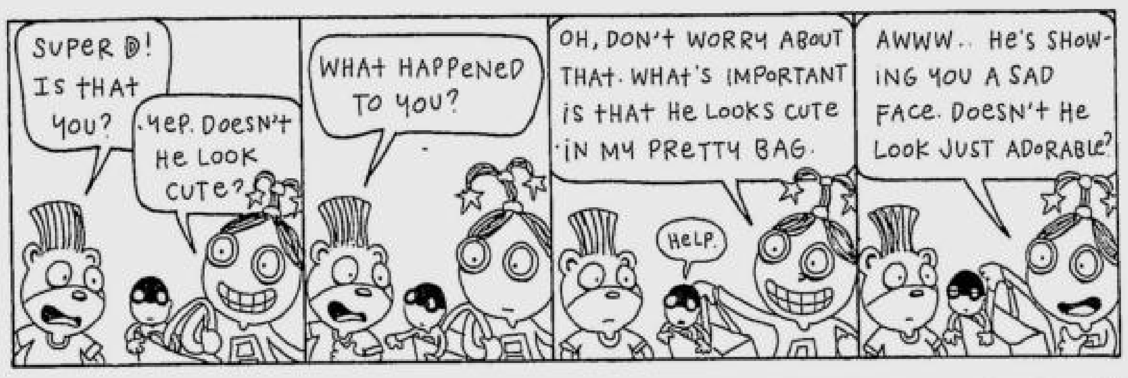
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ZOE, I NEED YOU TO PLAY WITH WREN WHILE I GET DINNER READY.
NO FAIR!!
I HAVE HOMEWORK TO DO!
OKAY, THEN HAMMIE CAN PLAY WITH HER WHILE ZOE DOES HER HOMEWORK.
NO FAIR!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


SUPER D! IS THAT YOU?
YEP. DOESN'T HE LOOK CUTE?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT HE LOOKS CUTE IN MY PRETTY BAG.
HELP.
AWWW.. HE'S SHOWING YOU A SAD FACE. DOESN'T HE LOOK JUST ADORABLE?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're cosmopolitan, sophisticated and downright classy. Artistically, you're ex tremely original. You make everything look easy. Many of you turn your hobbies into a career. It's important to believe in yourself, even if others don't understand you. In the year ahead, an important choice will arise. Choose wisely. You're starting to claim your power in the world.

Birthdate of: Shakira, singer; Graham Nash, musician; Tom Smothers, comedy brother.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be careful not to promise more than you can deliver, especially in situations where you are responsible for something. This also applies to how you handle shared property. Caution.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): In your attempt to please partners and bosses, you could lose your way. If you cannot do both, come clean. Don't promise the world if you can't deliver it.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Because you think fast, talk fast, work fast and move fast, you think you can deliver the impossible. But you put your pants on one leg at a time like everyone else. (Gotta remember this.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Be careful about the promises you make to children today. Children believe your promises. They think adults know what they're doing. Don't make a commitment you cannot keep.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You have high hopes with close partnerships lately. Leos like to believe the best about their friends because they refuse to see the faults in their loved ones, especially their children.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you have to estimate the delivery time of something or how much you can do in a certain prescribed time, be careful. Don't bite off more than you can handle.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's easy to overdo partying, eating and drinking today. (Saying you were overserved is no excuse.) Avoid excess.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't make grandiose promises to family members, especially parents. For some reason, you're tempted to do this. (You know who you are.)

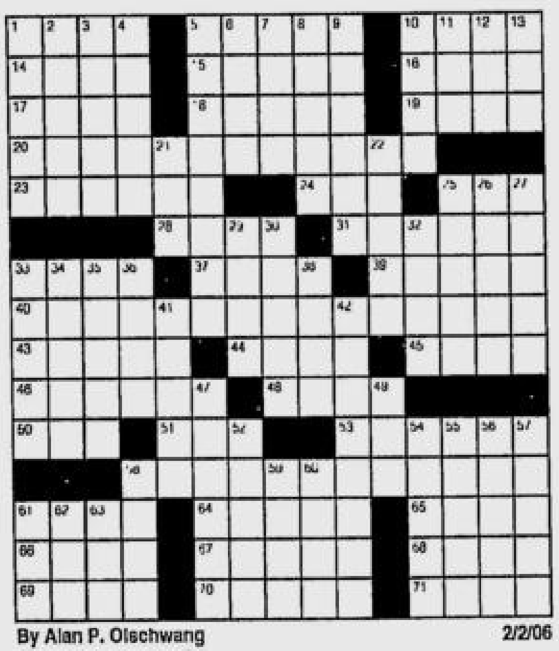
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Today (and yesterday) your eyes are bigger than your stomach. It's very easy for you to overextend yourself because you're naturally enthusiastic about everything. Be very careful right now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Watch your money today. If something looks too good to be true, it is. Don't go out on a limb (you might fall off).

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You have big ideas about travel, publishing and education right now. Try to stay realistic. Wait and see how things look in a few days. You need some time to get a better perspective.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're ready to give a friend the shirt off your back today. While this is a noble impulse, make sure you have another shirt to wear! Don't bet the farm.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

2/2/06

ACROSS
1 Milk type
5 Piercing remarks
10 Dregs
14 Queen Boleyn
15 Vigilant
16 Black as pitch
17 Hoarfrost
18 Gymnast Comaneci
19 Idyllic place
20 Start of Evan Esar quote
23 Intuits
24 Gender
25 Masseuse's milieu
28 Sundance Kid's girl
31 Moolah
33 Related (to)
37 Messes up
39 Mollycoddler
40 Part 2 of quote
43 Speak from a soapbox
44 Calendar confines
45 Sicilian resort
46 Kind of republic
48 Faded and dull
50 WSW opposite
51 Harem room
53 Writer Anatole
58 End of quote
61 Eager
64 "Casablanca" co-star
65 Go by Greyhound
66 Entice
67 Rub out
68 Even once
69 Checked out
70 Makes an impression?
71 Architect Saarinen

DOWN
1 Rani's wraps
2 Stiletto or dagger
3 "Newsboy" painter Henry
4 Track events
5 Handrail
6 Banned insecticide
7 Cincinnati ballplayers
8 Manchester men
9 Remained
10 Place
11 Conclude
12 __ out a living
13 Alternative wd.
21 Professional charge
22 Binary compound
25 Become established
26 Clean one's feathers
27 Main trunk
29 Low card
30 Moved in a curved path
32 Protuberance
33 Sun-dried brick
34 Sacred text of Islam
35 Puerile
36 __ bene
38 Char slightly
41 Mortise's partner
42 Conscripts
47 Befuddled
49 Bikini part
52 Love to pieces
54 Come to terms
55 Artless
56 Apple drink
57 Febrero preceder
58 Ripened
59 Teheran's country
60 Formerly, formerly
61 Stout alternative
62 Doll's date
63 Mine find

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

H	A	R	P	O	■	B	O	S	C	■	M	L	I	V
A	G	O	R	A	■	A	R	E	A	■	A	I	D	E
G	E	N	E	R	A	L	E	X	P	E	N	S	E	S
S	F	A	N	■	D	E	M	■	A	R	T	I	S	T
■	■	■	A	P	E	S	■	S	C	A	R	■	■	■
L	I	S	T	E	N	■	T	A	I	■	A	M	A	H
A	R	I	A	S	■	S	A	L	T	S	■	A	L	A
B	A	L	L	O	O	N	P	A	Y	M	E	N	T	S
E	T	O	■	S	P	I	E	S	■	E	L	I	O	T
L	E	S	S	■	P	P	S	■	P	L	E	A	S	E
■	■	■	O	N	O	S	■	T	A	L	C	■	■	■
E	L	E	V	E	N	■	R	A	T	■	T	U	B	E
D	E	L	I	V	E	R	Y	C	H	A	R	G	E	S
D	A	M	E	■	N	I	N	O	■	G	O	L	D	S
S	P	O	T	■	T	O	E	S	■	A	N	I	S	E

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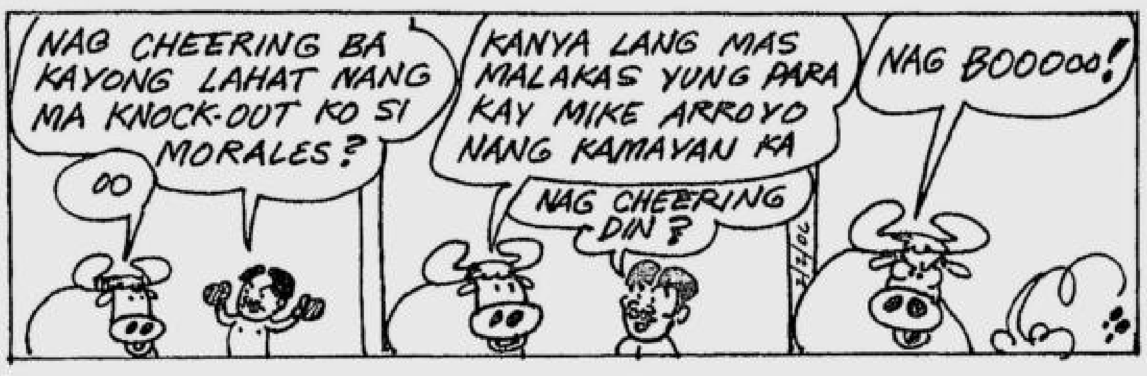
2/2/06

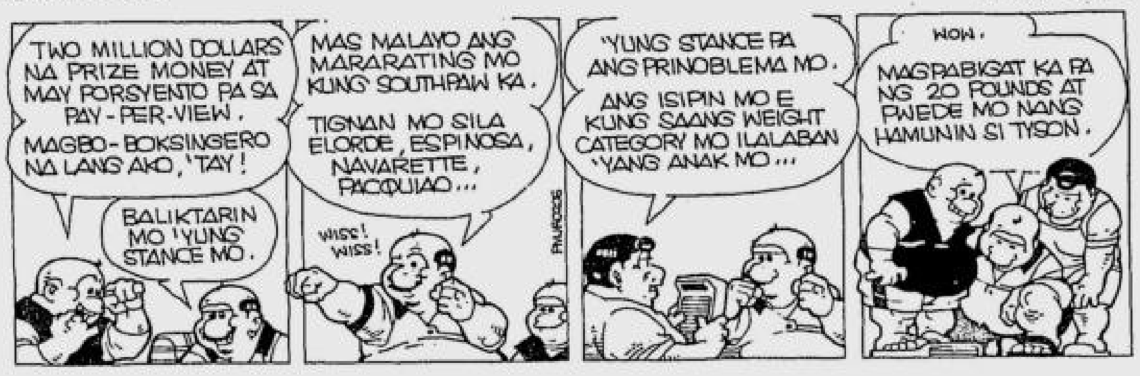
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAG CHEERING BA KAYONG LAHAT NANG MA KNOCK-OUT KO SI MORALES?
OO
KANYA LANG MAS MALAKAS YUNG PARA KAY MIKE ARROYO NANG KAMAYAN KA
NAG CHEERING DIN?
NAG BOOOOO!

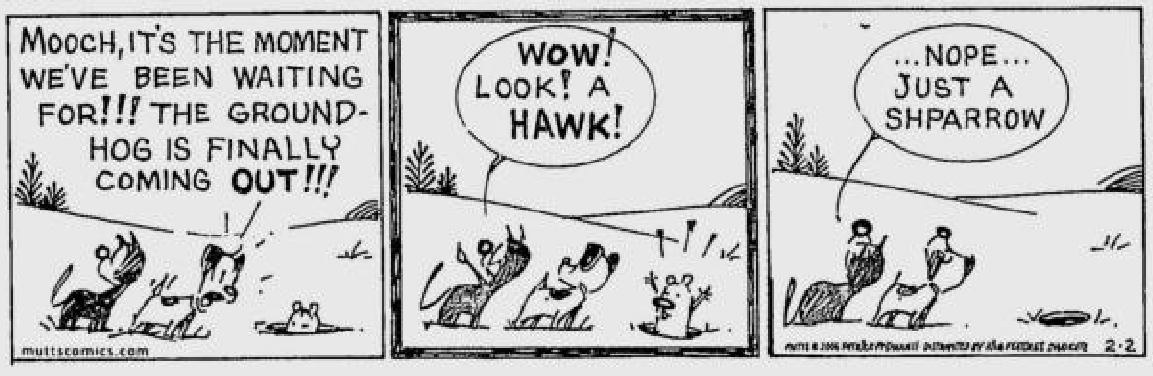
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TWO MILLION DOLLARS NA PRIZE MONEY AT MAY PORSYENTO PA SA PAY-PER-VIEW.
MAGBO-BOKSINGERO NA LANG AKO, 'TAY!
BALIKTARIN MO 'YUNG STANCE MO.
MAS MALAYO ANG MARARATING MO KUNG SOUTHPAW KA.
TIGNAN MO SILA ELORDE, ESPINOSA, NAVARETTE, PACQUIAO...
WISS! WISS!
'YUNG STANCE PA ANG PRINOBLEMA MO.
ANG ISIPIN MO E KUNG SAANG WEIGHT CATEGORY MO ILALABAN 'YANG ANAK MO...
WOW.
MAGPABIGAT KA PA NG 20 POUNDS AT PWEDE MO NANG HAMUNIN SI TYSON.

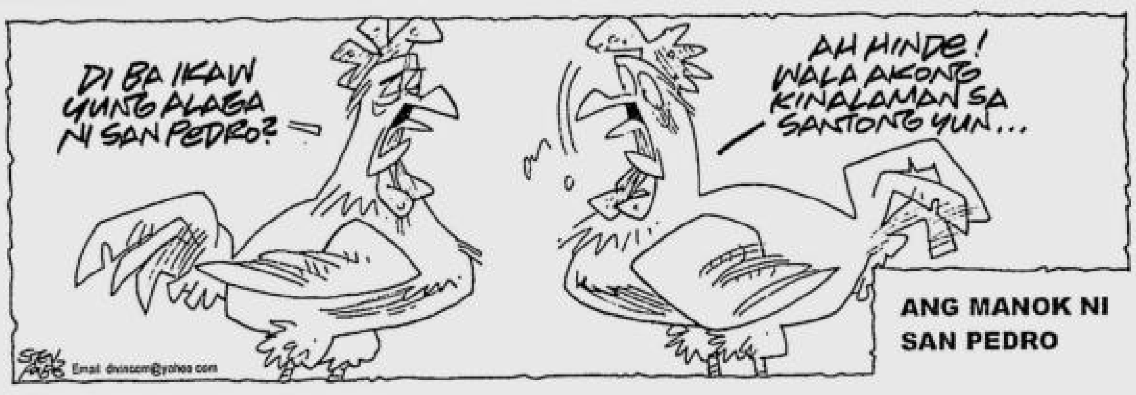
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MOOCH, IT'S THE MOMENT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!!! THE GROUNDHOG IS FINALLY COMING OUT!!!
WOW! LOOK! A HAWK!
...NOPE... JUST A SHPARROW
muttscomics.com
2-2

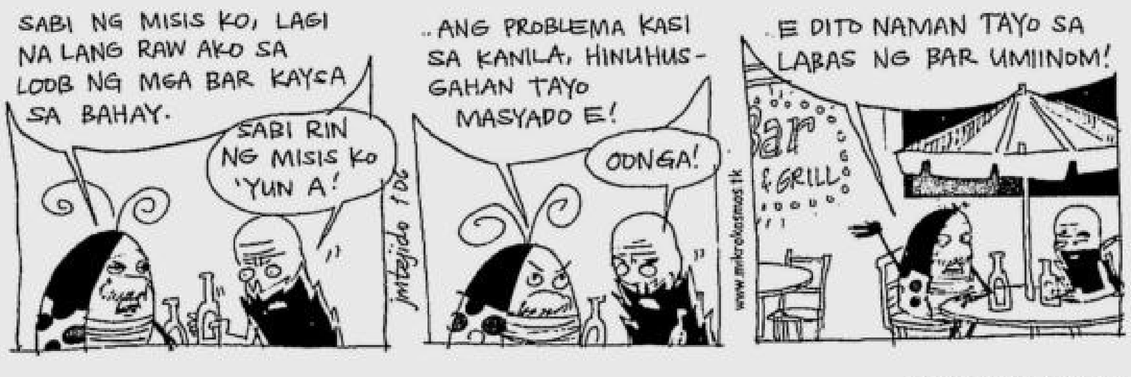
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


DI BA IKAW YUNG ALAGA NI SAN PEDRO?
AH HINDE! WALA AKONG KINALAMAN SA SANTONG YUN...
ANG MANOK NI SAN PEDRO
Email: divincom@yahoo.com

MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SABI NG MISIS KO, LAGI NA LANG RAW AKO SA LOOB NG MGA BAR KAYSA SA BAHAY.
SABI RIN NG MISIS KO 'YUN A!
jmtejido 1'06
..ANG PROBLEMA KASI SA KANILA, HINUHUSGAHAN TAYO MASYADO E!
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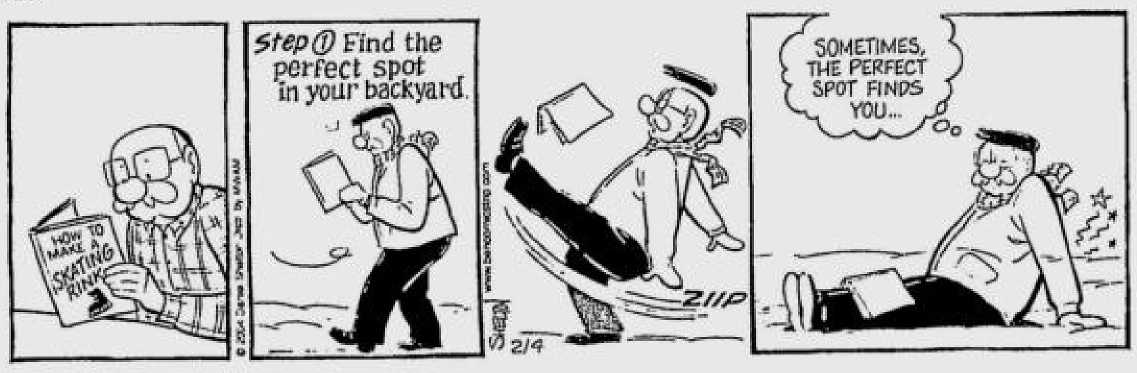
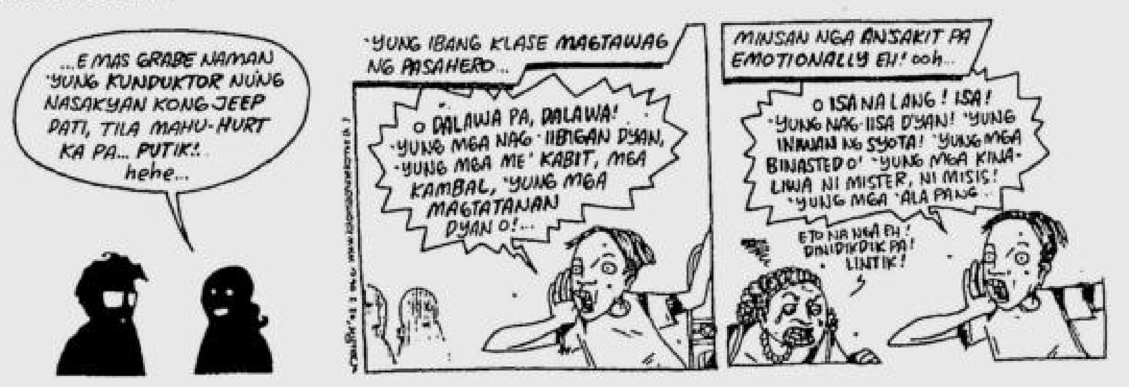
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HOW TO MAKE A SKATING RINK
Step ① Find the perfect spot in your backyard.
ZIIP
2/4
SOMETIMES, THE PERFECT SPOT FINDS YOU...

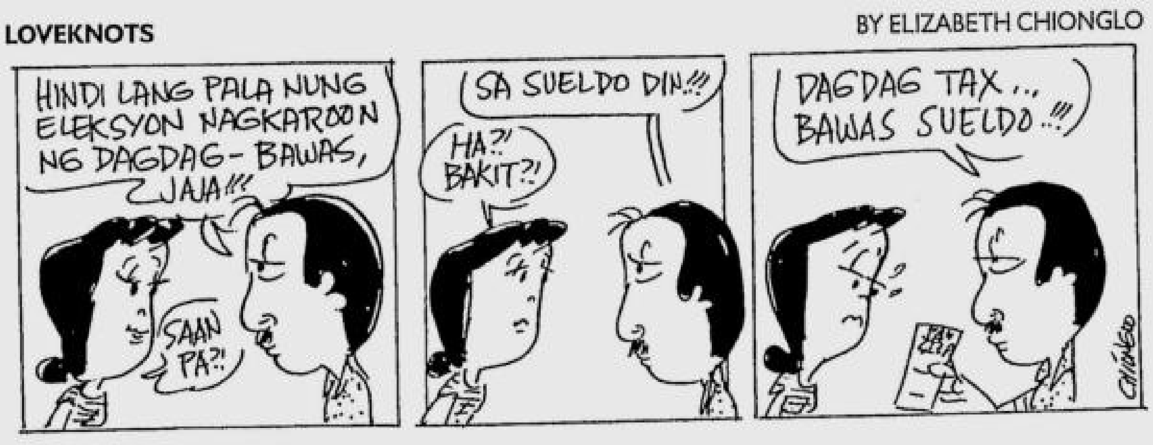
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


...E MAS GRABE NAMAN 'YUNG KUNDUKTOR NUNG NASAKYAN KONG JEEP DATI, TILA MAHU-HURT KA PA... PUTIK!.. hehe...
'YUNG IBANG KLASE MAGTAWAG NG PASAHERO...
O DALAWA PA, DALAWA! 'YUNG MGA NAG-IIBIGAN D'YAN, 'YUNG MGA ME' KABIT, MGA KAMBAL, 'YUNG MGA MAGTATANAN DYAN O!...
MINSAN NGA ANSAKIT PA EMOTIONALLY EH! ooh...
O ISA NA LANG! ISA! 'YUNG NAG-IISA D'YAN! 'YUNG INIWAN NG SYOTA! 'YUNG MGA BINASTED O! 'YUNG MGA KINALIWA NI MISTER, NI MISIS! 'YUNG MGA 'ALA PANG...
ETO NA NGA EH! DINIDIKDIK PA! LINTIK!

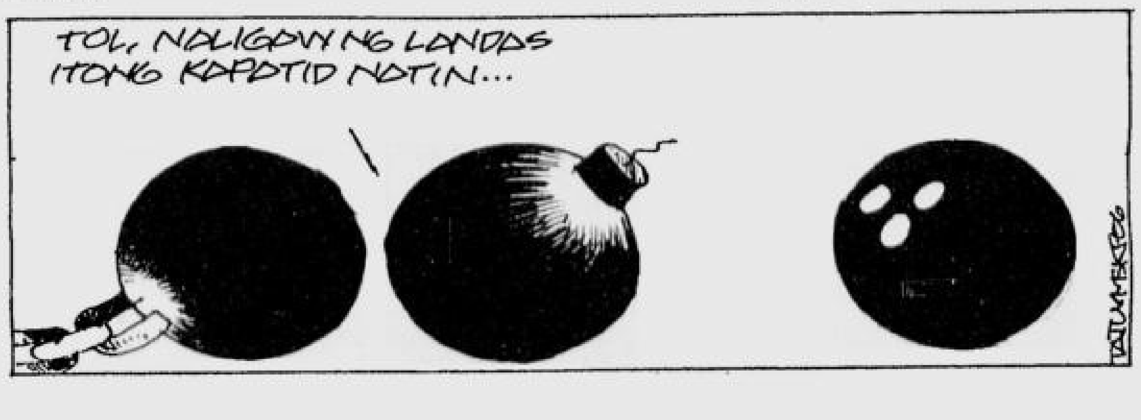
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

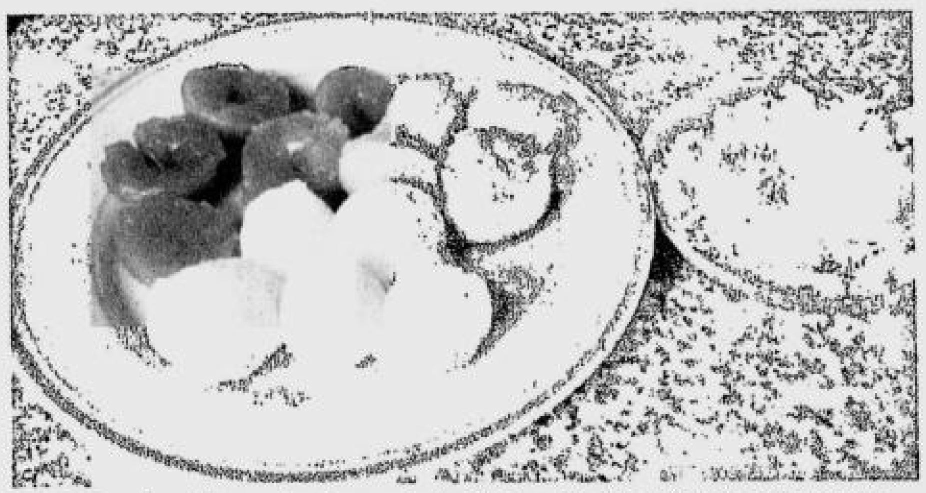

HINDI LANG PALA NUNG ELEKSYON NAGKAROON NG DAGDAG-BAWAS, JAJA!!!
SAAN PA?!
SA SUELDO DIN!!!
HA?! BAKIT?!
DAGDAG TAX... BAWAS SUELDO..!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


TOL, NALIGAW NG LANDAS ITONG KAPATID NATIN...

The necessary side dish


PUTO Popular white and red are paired with *pancit palabok* (right) and *dinuguan*.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

PARES, "THE ORIGINAL PARES," banners its distinction on its marquee on España Avenue in Manila.

I've always been curious about that place and vowed to go there one day. I still haven't.

Does the name mean that food served there are in pairs? Or is the restaurant named after the owner, the friendly *pare* (male friend) who didn't know how to use an apostrophe (e.g. Robinsons)?

If foods served there are in pairs, then the eatery practices the traditional way of Filipino eating. Some food need to be served with a side dish.

It isn't known when this practice started, or why, but the pairing suits our taste.

The classic pairing is *dinuguan at puto*. While *puto* can be eaten by itself or with other dishes, the blood stew seems incomplete without this native rice cake. In Marilao, Bulacan, one place has done *putong* Pulo for more than 50 years so the adjoining restaurant serves *dinuguan* and *pancit palabok* as its mainstays, the perfect pair for the *puto*.

'Pancit' and 'tokwa'

On the other hand, *pancit palabok* or *pancit* Malabon can be paired with *tokwa't baboy*. The latter, if done properly, involves boiling pig's ears and tongue, frying the fermented soy-bean cake and slicing it into cubes, then mixing them in a sauce of soy-vinegar with lots of chopped onions.

My husband, who dislikes *tokwa*, always orders the all-pork version, which my sons have christened *"baboy at baboy."*

In areas that enjoy fermented rice with either fish or shrimp (*buro* and *balo-balo* in Pampanga, *balaw-balaw* in Rizal), it's a must to serve the dish with the *inihaw na isda*, and always with *mustasa* leaves.

Every Friday, many homes still serve *monggo* soup with *paksiw na isda*. It's a carryover from those days when Fridays meant abstaining from meat unless your *monggo* soup has crushed *chicharon* like ours sometimes.

In the Visayas, *monggo* is paired with *escabeche*, which is not like the sweet-and-sour fish in Luzon but is a version of *paksiw* with yellow ginger or turmeric (*dilaw*). It was also by accident that I discovered how *monggo* soup with *ampalaya* leaves, when paired with sweet-and-sour anything, turned the mix terribly bitter.

'Sinigang' and 'lumpia'

Years ago, in a small canteen in Malate, the Thursday menu was always *sinigang na baboy* with vegetable *lumpiang prito*. It was, for me, perfect, the sour soup contrasting with the crisp *lumpia*. For others, *sinigang* is always good with any *inihaw*, a combination of wet and dry.

Families have their own special pairing. Sonny Tinio, culture cognoscenti, spoke of his father's boiled red shrimps with sliced green mangoes and *bagoong alamang*. *Cocido*, the Bicol fish *sinigang*, is always eaten with *pili* fruit and *kuyog*, fermented small *samaral* in rice.

In her cookbook, "Let's Cook with Nora" (Bookman Printing House, 1979), Nora Daza paired *lechon* cooked in the oven with candied sweet yams or sweet potatoes baked in syrup and butter. In her other book, "A Culinary Life" (Anvil Publishing, 1992), two boiled dishes are served with their respective sauces. *Cocido* is served with Spanish *tomatada*, a rich tomato sauce, and *puchero* with an eggplant sauce.

Daza gave another pairing of crisp *adobo* flakes with *kare-kare* that she said Glenda Barretto served at her former restaurant, the Nielson Tower in Makati. I found that combination of a meat dish with another meat dish odd. But others volunteered *binagoongang baboy* or *kilawing librillo* (tripe stewed in vinegar) with *kare-kare*.

When I mentioned those pairings, Felice Prudente Sta. Maria, author of several historical and cultural books, began to enumerate even more extensive *kare-kare* pairings.

'Kare-kare' menu

With information gathered from the Cruz family of Cavite, Sta. Maria texted me the complete *kari-kari* (alternate spelling) menu. That included *bagoong alamang*, white rice, *kilawin* of banana blossoms, boiled or steamed shrimps and chicken *adobo* that's fried crisp.

This package was sold by vendors in Cainta and other Pasig towns close to the route of the old Antipolo pilgrimage. In these riverbank towns, pilgrims transferred to hammocks (for women) and to horses (for men) to make the climb to the Antipolo hills.

Sta. Maria also mentioned how her father's kin in Rosario, Cavite, served boiled shrimp with *adobo*.

My *adobo* pairing is always with banana, the *latundan* variety. My friend Chit Lijauco said that, in her hometown of Sta. Rosa Laguna, the practice of eating viands with fruits was called *nagpuputat*.

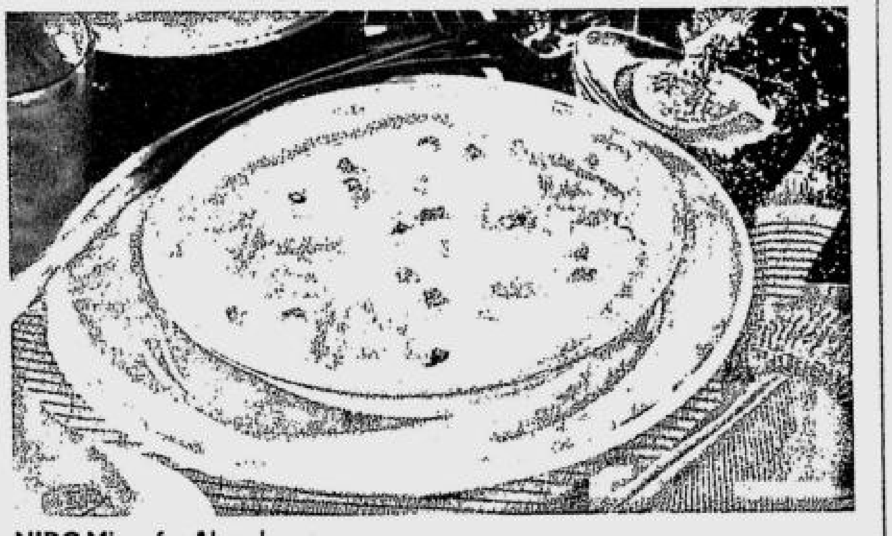
In Marikina, a kind of fruit salad is served with fried fish. The salad is really *ginumis*, the concoction of *sago* with *gulaman* and *pinipig*, plus slices of *kaimito*, *lakatan* and *chico* (whatever is in season) in *gatang hilaw* or cold uncooked coconut milk.

It ensures that the oily aftertaste of the fried fish is washed off by this refreshing dessert.

E-mail me at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

Dishing out happiness and luck

CHICKEN Patties for Positive Chi


NIDO Misua for Abundance

TO USHER IN THIS YEAR OF THE Fire Dog, Knorr Real Chinese Soups introduces 12 lucky dishes concocted by Susan Quimico, a "Makuha Ka sa Tikim" diva, and Lorraine Timbol, Unilever Foods activation consultant. Each dish has been created to go with the forecast for the year for each of 12 animal signs of the zodiac, according to feng shui expert Victor Wang.

These 12 lucky recipes that will enable women to cook for good luck are: Hot and Sour Soup for Perfect Balance, Chicken Soup for Romance, Chicken Patties for Positive Chi, Knorr Chinese Pancit Canton, Mixed Seafood Treasure Soup, Nido Misua for Abundance, Nido Potato Soup of Wealth, Pork and Two Kinds Mushroom, Yin and Yang Soup, Three Pearl Crab and Corn, Pork with Tokwa in Hot and Sour Sauce, Nido Onion Soup. Knorr shares a few of these recipes below.

As their way of spreading good luck in a bowl, Knorr is also going to malls all over Luzon to give mall-goers a taste of its lucky soups. After SM Manila, SM Centerpoint, SM Bacoor, SM San Lazaro, Ever Commonwealth and Landmark, the soup tastings will move to other SM and Robinsons malls in Luzon as well as in Glorietta, Market! Market!, Festival Mall, Shangri-La Mall, Gateway, Ali Mall, Alabang Town Center, Star Mall Edsa, Tutuban Center, and Riverbanks Mall throughout the two-week Lunar New Year celebration.

Nido Misua for Abundance

(*For Monkeys*)

1 c chicken breast fillet, cut into cubes (for happiness)
½ tbsp Knorr Liquid Seasoning
1 tbsp cooking oil
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 pack Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup dissolved in 4 c water
1 pc egg (for fertility/abundance)
1 c misua noodles (for health and long life)
Spring onions, finely chopped

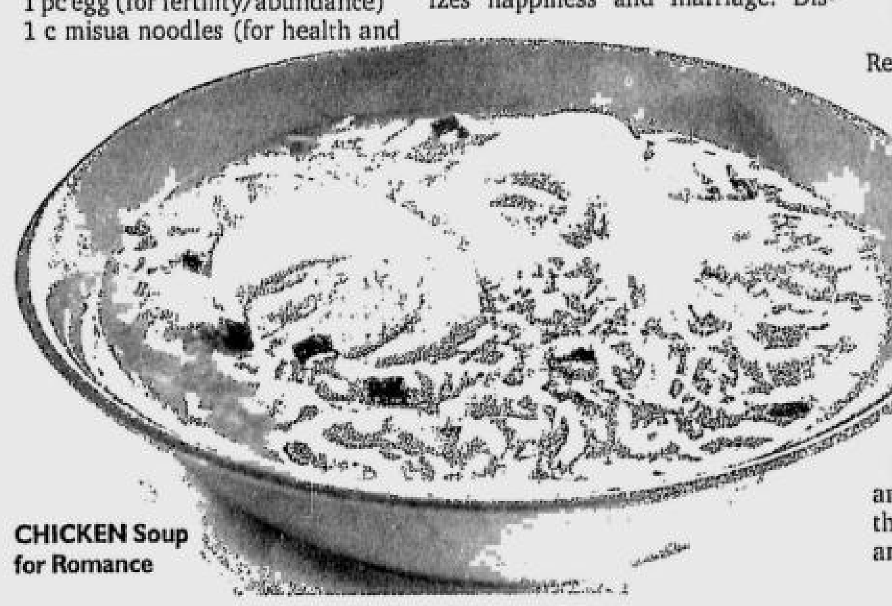
Marinate the chicken breast in Knorr Liquid Seasoning for 30 minutes. In a pan with hot oil, sauté the chicken breast with garlic. Pour in the dissolved Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup. Add one egg, then stir with a fork. Add the misua noodles. When cooked, top with spring onions and serve hot.

Chicken Soup for Romance

(*For Rabbits*)

1 pack Knorr Chicken and Corn Real Chinese Soup with egg (for happiness and marriage)
3 ½-4 c water
1 egg
5 hard-boiled eggs (for love and fertility)
Dried *alamang*, pan-fried

For the Chinese, chicken symbolizes happiness and marriage. Dissolve Knorr Chicken and Corn real Chinese Soup in 3-4 c water. Simmer until soup thickens then add 1 egg and continue stirring until egg is well dispersed. Put five boiled eggs in separate bowls. Pour the soup in each bowl, then top with pan-fried *alamang*.


CHICKEN Soup for Romance

Chicken Patties for Positive Chi

(*For Roosters*)

¼ k chicken, minced (for happiness and marriage)
2 pcs small carrots, chopped
3 tbsp fresh *wansoy*, chopped
4 tbsp cornstarch
4 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 tbsp sugar
5 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp Knorr Liquid Seasoning
2 pcs eggs
1 tsp black pepper powder
3 tbsp sesame oil
1 pack Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup (pork for wealth)
1/3 c water
1 tbsp toasted garlic

Mix the first 11 ingredients and add half of the Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup. Mix very well. Shape the mixture into round patties (about 3" circles) and pan-fry until golden brown. In a separate pan, dissolve the remaining Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup in water and simmer until it thickens. Pour the sauce onto the chicken patties and top with toasted garlic.

CLASSES

Free cooking demo in mall

"Mobile Kusina," the weekly cooking show, goes to the mall. Learn "Fast-antic recipes" from Mobile Kusina chefs in a free cooking demonstration on Feb. 25, 1-4 p.m., at the Activity Center of SM San Lazaro, Manila. The chefs will teach new, easy yet mouthwatering recipes and give tips on weekly menu planning. Just bring three empty wrappers of Magnolia, Monterey, Magnolia Chicken and/or Purefoods-Hormel products. Members of My Great Food Club must bring their IDs. Call 6719876 local 402/ 404/405.

Corned beef-making and smoking

The Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts will offer the following classes:

Feb. 3—Make Your Own Corned Beef: Whole Corned Beef Brisket Made from Scratch; soup, salad, side dishes. Each participant brings home a mini slab.

Feb. 4—Melt in Your Mouth Ribs: Chinese Style, Lamb Teriyaki, Fried Honey Ribs, American Diner Style, Fruit Glazed Ribs, Garlic Ribs, Delicious Oriental Style, Baked with Soda Barbecue Sauce; salsas, side dishes and desserts

Feb. 6—Wood Chip Smoked: Perfect the art of smoking. Make your own Home-made Smoked Salmon with Condiments, Wood Chip Roast Chicken, Smoked Ribs Tex-Mex Style, Wood Chip Roasted Duck with Orange Sauce, Whole Wood Chip Roasted Lamb; sauces and side dishes

Feb. 8—Brine 2 (all new): Brined Roast Chicken in Wine Sauce, Brine Roasted Limoncello Turkey, Brined Pork Chops Served Two Ways-Herb Butter and Apple Roasted; side dishes.

Call 9289296/9273008/6335162.

Choco baking workshop, Feb. 4

Learn to make your own chocolate treats at Maya Kitchen's "Chocolate Workshop," Feb. 4, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. To be covered are a range of classic items like Chocolate Mousse, Cheesecake, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Almond Roca, as well as assorted chocolate-coated candies and truffles. In "Brownie Plus Baking from Prepared Mix," Feb. 4, 3-6 p.m., you will learn to make Black Forest Brownies, Apple Chunk, Rocky Road, Butterscotch squares and two-way chocolate crinkles with costing.

"Basic Culinary," Feb. 7-10, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., offers proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of mirepoix; stocks, soups, sauces, marinades; use of herbs and spices combinations; proper purchasing, storage; techniques of disjointing and boning poultry; filleting fish and meat fabrication. Learn actual preparation of dishes from appetizer, salad, eggs, pasta, seafood, poultry and meats, dessert, including garnishing for plate presentation. Enrollees get a free Mix & Match cookbook.

Call Maya Kitchen (Tuesday-Saturday), 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City, or call 8921185 or 8925011 local 108. E-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.

Hearty meals for the love month

T.G.I.FRIDAY'S OFFERS DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR only P750. You can choose an appetizer and any two entrees. Appetizers include Fried Calamari, Friday's Mushroom, Broccoli Cheese Soup, Buffalo Wings (for one person) and Soup of the Day. Entrée choices include Caesar Salad Lunch, BBQ Chicken Salad, Spicy New Orleans, Tossed Tomato Basil, Charbroiled Chicken Sandwich, Chicken Fingers, Pacific Grilled Porkchop, Chicken and Liempo Combo, and half slab of either Baby Back Ribs or Jack Daniel's Glazed Ribs. Friday's branches are in Glorietta 3, Makati; Robinsons Place Manila; Hotel Rembrandt on Tomas Morato, Quezon City; Alabang Town Center; and Sta. Lucia East. The special treat is available until March 31.

DINING OUT

WOMEN cabin crew members will get served for a change on Feb. 8, when Citrus, the newest bar at Glorietta, offers them free Absolut Vodka-based drinks from 10 p.m. to midnight. For all other airline employees, a 50-percent discount will be given on Absolut and selected brands from midnight onward. Airline personnel have to show their IDs to avail of the discount. Dubbed Absolutly Flying at Citrus, the promo is part of the former V Bar's opening festivities. Citrus owner Louie Ysmael said the bar, located at G/F, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City, will have a monthly promo.

UNA MAS offers a special Valentine Set Menu, Feb. 10-14, consisting of Mejillones, Ostras con Espinacas, Caesar Salad or Minestrone Soup, Paella Espanola, Roast Beef, Decadent Chocolate Cake and a glass of wine, for 495+ per person. It also offers the House Specialties Buffet. Una Mas has branches in Greenbelt 2, Ayala Center, Makati and Greenhills Shopping Center in San Juan. Call 7573357 to 56 or 7230012.

OUTBACK Restaurant offers the 16 oz Porterhouse steaks, served with fresh salad classic side dish. Outback branches are in Glorietta 4, Makati; Libis-Quezon City; and Alabang Town Center-Alabang.

RICHMONDE Grill offers chocolate dessert creations such as Sacher Torte, Choco Moist Roll, Choco Trifle, Choco Mocha Almond Cake, Choco Tobleron Cheesecake and a variety of divine pralines. The dessert buffet is part of the restaurant's lunch buffet that also includes appetizers. Buffet price is P585+ per person, while the dessert buffet costs P250+. Diners opting for à la carte lunch get a 50-percent discount for dessert buffet from February to March. Call 6387777 local 3409.

A guided tour of French cooking

Text and photos by Michaela Fenix

FRENCH FLAGS WERE FLYING ALL over the buffet table. It was part of the décor as well as a sign that French food was being featured at the Raphael Café of the Holiday Inn Galleria Manila (lunch buffet until March 14).

Executive chef Cyrille Soenen cooked the food of his home country and that was reassuring. He also served as guide to the cuisine, providing background and explanations for particular dishes.

Take steak tartare. For many people at our table, it wasn't something to be eaten but to be wary of. This raw minced beef dish is not as popular as the raw fish choices or the Japanese sashimi. So they looked on as some of us partook of the dish, including Soenen.

At the steak tartare table, one of Soenen's assistants mixed the meat with whatever accompaniments such as onions, egg yolk, mustard and capers and the liquid flavors like Worcestershire sauce and Tabasco. The meat mixture was shaped like a hamburger patty and served with fries on a small plate with mustard and mayonnaise.

While one instinctively knows how to eat the steak tartare, it was worthwhile watching how the French ate it. Everyone looked at Soenen as he took a bite of the steak, ate the fries with his fork, unlike those of us who picked up the fries the way we did at a fast food restaurant.

Steak tartare, according to the chef, was what Parisians ate after partying. It's akin to our *tapsilog* or even *goto* with *lugaw, a pick-me-up snack before snoozing.*

No waiting

Certainly French were the liver pâté and the variety of cheeses. They did not have to wait long for takers since there were some of us who could subsist on just those. The pâté was done so well we could have moved from there to the dessert. But there were main dishes waiting.

According to the promotional brochure, the kind of French cooking served for this festival was the *cuisine du terroir*, regional specialties that meant traditional cooking. Hence, expect dishes like *moules a la màrinière* (mussels in white wine and garlic), *blanquette de veau* (veal stew) and *pot-au-feu* (boiled beef dinner).

Chef Soenen looked puzzled that there was no wine to accompany this proper French meal. But, on each table, a list of the wines were available, French, of course. He ordered for everyone.

After the steak, the pâté, a cream soup of leeks and potatoes, it was time for dessert. The dessert portion occupies about a third of the whole buffet lineup. And if you see the choices, you'll have to breathe deeply to search for some space in your body so you can take everything you want.

GÂTEAU Saint-Honoré for the birthday honoree

EXECUTIVE chef Cyrille Soenen

I'd recommend the Madeleine dipped in chocolate, which was excellent. Some items were familiar, like the *Gâteau Saint-Honoré*, a cake surrounded by puff pastry, and the *île flottante* or floating island, meringue surrounded by a creamy custard, similar to the *canonigo*.

Parting gift

The eating didn't stop there because each one was given a parting gift, a special one baked by the chef. The *Canele de Bordeaux* was a Y-shaped small cake baked in a specific *canele* container. The *canele* was the official cake of the city of Bordeaux invented by the sisters of the Sainte-Eulalie convent. The texture is like a *mamon* flavored with rum and vanilla, with a little bitter taste probably because the exterior is a bit burnt. But the bitter is a good counterpoint to the generally sweet cake.

By gifting us with the Canele de Bordeaux, chef Soenen kept with the tradition of giving the cake as a souvenir. That souvenir, however, did not last long.

Managing a Catering Business

MB&G/ProActive is conducting a seminar-workshop on **Managing a Catering Business**, 1-5 p.m., February 13 -17, 2006, Ortigas Complex, Pasig City.

Reservations are currently being accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. For more details, call Mr. Manu Ofiaza at 821-3583 or 0915-4315375. Seminar fee is P5,000.00 per participant inclusive of all workshop materials.

The five-day training will cover, among other topics, planning the menu, equipment and personnel; costing, pricing, cost control and marketing.

MB&G/ProActive has been in the business of training foodservice executives and business owners since 1989.

Advt.

Pag-Ibig members have to wait to get back contributions

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

A PAG-IBIG MEMBER, WHO QUIT HER regular job some six years ago wanted to know if she would be able to withdraw her contributions.

She wrote to Pag-ibig to inquire about the requirements for withdrawal of contributions. She did not have any outstanding obligations with the institution having paid off her housing loan a year or two after she left her job.

This is Pag-Ibig's answer to her query:

"Please be informed that a member of Pag-ibig may withdraw his/her savings only under the following conditions (whichever comes first):

- Maturity, where a member has completed 20 years of active fund membership and 240 contributions;
- Retirement, where a member has reached the mandatory retirement age of 65, the optional retirement age of 60, or has opted to avail of his company's early retirement at age 45;
- Permanent departure from the country
- Permanent/total physical disability
- Insanity
- Termination from service by reason of health
- Death of member

If a member qualified under any of those conditions, she would have to fill up an application for Provident Benefits to be submitted, together with other requirements to the branch or regional office where your remittances are made.

In the meantime, she would not be eligible for any of the Pag-ibig. If she wanted to continue enjoying them, Pag-Ibig said:

"You can opt to reactivate your membership to avail of your benefits as a member. To do so, just approach the nearest branch and request for reactivation. You will be asked to fill out the Members Data Form and present some proof of income. This proof will depend on your source of income at present. For further information regarding membership reactivation, you can call the Makati marketing division at 8114014."

Asked for further clarification, Pag-ibig said, "When a member stops remitting contributions, his/her account becomes inactive but remains intact until such time that the member qualifies for withdrawal of savings or the account is reactivated either by reemployment or by the member as a voluntary payor. Even as the account remains inactive, it will continue to earn dividends every year."

So there. People without regular jobs who may have hoped they could withdraw their contributions to Pag-ibig so they would be able to use the money would have to resign themselves to a long wait, if they do not qualify under those conditions mentioned earlier.

Fake collector

A man who had been victimizing Maynilad customers since 1999 was arrested last week right inside the Metropolitan Waterworks Sewerage System compound. The same man was convicted earlier by the Manila Metropolitan Trial Court for posing as a Maynilad employee.

The suspect allegedly collected money from customers and issued them fake documents.

According to Maynilad official Florencio T. Cayco, the impostor, named Carlos Santos, "would (supposedly) conduct an investigation and claim that he had uncovered an illegal connection. This allowed him to extort money from the customer, who would be willing to pay so his water connection won't be cut off."

Cayco said Santos used at least seven aliases to victimize unsuspecting Maynilad Water Services Incorporated customers.

Readers' feedback

Myrna Dizon of Newton, Makati, sent us a thank-you letter for Maynilad. "I am glad we finally got action on our complaint. Hurray! A repair crew from Maynilad came to repair the leaking pipe in our neighborhood."

From C.N. Wang of Cebu City: "I have noticed the proliferation of advertisements on cable stations lately. Correct me if I am wrong, but isn't the concept of cable (all about being free) of these ads? (Isn't that what we pay for?) Or have the rules changed?"

Concerned consumer E. Rosales warns readers of two scams that almost trapped him. One was a "special offer" from a woman-caller who seductively invited him on a date so she could show him the expensive discount card she was selling. When he accepted the invitation, she asked for his credit card number.

The woman, however, did not show up for their date. Moreover, he found out later that the cost of the discount card was charged to his credit card account. And that's not all there is to it. The card was not honored by the establishments listed in the manual sent to him.

"It took me two months to request my credit card company to return my money," Rosales said.

The other scam was a telephone call from a certain company announcing that Rosales had won a gift certificate for a three-days-and-two-nights' stay in a triple "A" resort. When he went to claim the prize, he was told he should first buy an insurance package. The cost of the package would deplete his savings, Rosales said.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH
Breads: *Caraway Rye Bread • Apple Cinnamon Comb*
Cakes: *Nougatine Cake • Chocolate Cheese Pie*
Cold Cuts and Sausages: *Champignon Cold Cuts • Valentine Smoked Sausage*
Perfect Gifts on Valentine's Day: *Heart Shaped Cake • Choco Praline Box*

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About Chef Dennis: Dean's List graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY/Food Stylist/* Owner of Joconde Cakes/* Took over classes from the Famed Gourmet, Maur Aquino Lichauco in New Manila/*Trained under the tutelage of World Pastry Cup Champion En Ming Hsu of the Ritz Carlton Chicago (a Four Seasons Hotel), Dan Budd of Park Avenue Café Chicago, Cake Stylist Betty Van Norstrand, Food Stylist Delores Custer and other instructors in the Philippines

BAKING CLASSES (Saturdays)
February 4, 2006: CAKES & TORTES III (Simply Irresistible)
NEW CLASS Frozen Mango Mousse Torte, Mocha Almond Sans Rival, Melts in the Mouth Brazo Torte, Blueberry Cheesecake Torte-P1600
February 11, 2006: CHOCOLATE...CHOCOLATE (Decadent Chocolate Desserts) NEW CLASS Triple Chocolate Fudge Roll, Flourless Chocolate Torte, No Bake Chocolate and Hazelnut Torte, Double Chocolate Muffins, Sinful Fudge Brownie Tart P1600
February 18, 2006: CAKES AND TORTES II (A Repeat of our Favorites) Caramel Cake, Mocha Cream Cake, Orange Fantasy Cake, Quick Chocolate Mousse Cake, Ube Cake P1600
February 25, 2006: DELECTABLE PIES (To Die For Pies) Banana Cream Pie, Dulce de Leche Pie, Crunched Pecan Pie, Egg Pie in Flaky Crust, Lemon Meringue Pie-P1600

COOKING CLASSES (Wednesdays)
*Featuring a Series of Classes of RECIPES by Famed Gourmet MAUR AQUINO LICHAUCO
February 08, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAUCO'S KITCHEN 1 (Light Meals) NEW CLASS Eggplant Appetizer, Muffuletta Sandwich, Quiche Lorraine Maur Lichauco, German Potato Salad, Roasted Vegetable Salad, 2 Kinds of Dressings -P1700
February 15, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAUCO'S KITCHEN 2 NEW CLASS Chicken Liver Pate, Baked Fish Alexandra (Hollandaise Sauce), Flank Steak with Potato Casserole, Chicken Marengo P1700
February 22, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAUCO'S KITCHEN 3 NEW CLASS Cold Pasta, Mushroom Cannelloni, Sun Dried Tomato Pasta, Fish Maxine, Country Style Chicken Kiev-P1700
*Call or Text 0917-8486656/0928-7912128 or email us at gourmetpastry@aol.com, for reservations. *Ask for GIRARD or YVETTE.
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